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AN EXTRACT

FROM

MR. LAW'S SERIOUS CALL

TO

A HOLY LIFE.

BY REV. JOHN WESLEY, A.M.

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AN EXTRACT

FROM

MR. LAW'S SERIOUS CALL TO A HOLY LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

Concerning the nature and extent of Christian devotion.

1. DEVOTION is neither private nor public prayer; but prayers, whether private or public, are particular parts or instances of devotion. Devotion signifies a life devoted to God.

He therefore is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God; who considers God in every thing, who serves God in every thing, who makes all the parts of his common life, parts of piety, by doing every thing in the name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to his glory.

2. We readily acknowledge, that God alone is to be the rule and measure of our prayers; that in them we are to look wholly unto him, and act wholly for him; that we are only to pray in such a manner, for such things, and such ends, as are suitable to his glory.

Now let any one but find out the reason why he is to be thus strictly pious in his prayers, and he will find the same as strong a reason to be as strictly pious in all the other parts of his life.

For there is not the least reason why we should make God the rule and measure of our prayers, why we should then look wholly unto him, and pray according to his will ; but what equally proves it necessary for us to look wholly unto God, and make him the rule and measure of all the other actions of our life. Were it not our strict duty to live by reason, to devote all the actions of our lives to God ; were it not absolutely necessary to walk before him in wisdom and holiness, and all heavenly conversation, doing every thing in his name and for his glory ; there would be no excellency or wisdom in the most heavenly prayers : nay, such prayers would be absurdities ; they would be like prayers for *wings*, when it was no part of our duty to *fly*.

3. As sure therefore as there is any wisdom in praying for the Spirit of God, so sure is it, that we are to make that Spirit the rule of *all* our actions ; as sure as it is our duty to look *wholly* unto God in our prayers, so sure is it, that it is our duty to live *wholly* unto God in our lives. But we can no more be said to live unto God, unless we live unto him in all *our ordinary* actions, unless he be the rule and measure of all our ways, than we can be said to pray unto God, unless our prayers look *wholly* unto him. So that unreasonable and absurd ways of life, whether in *labour* or *diversion*, whether they consume our *time* or our *money*, are like unreasonable and absurd prayers, and are as truly an offence unto God.

4. It is for want of knowing, or at least con-

sidering this, that we see such a *mixture* of ridicule in the lives of many people. You see them strict as to some *times* and *places* of devotion ; but when the service of the *church* is over, they are but like those that seldom or never come there. In their way of life, their manner of spending their *time* and *money*, in their *cares* and *fears*, in their *pleasures* and *indulgences*, in their labour and diversions, they are like the rest of the world. This makes the loose part of the world generally make a jest of those that are *devout*, because they see their devotion goes no further than their *prayers*, and that they live no more unto God, till the time of prayer returns again ; but live by the same *humour* and *fancy*, and in as full an enjoyment of all the follies of life, as other people. This is the reason why they are the jest of worldly people ; not because they are really devoted to God, but because they appear to have no other devotion, but that of *occasional prayers*.

5. Julius is very fearful of missing prayers : all the parish supposes Julius to be sick, if he is not at *church*. But if you were to ask him, Why he spends the rest of his time by *humour* or *chance* ? Why he is a companion of the silliest people in their most *silly pleasures* ? Why he is ready for every impudent entertainment and diversion ? If you were to ask him why there is no amusement too trifling to please him ? Why he gives himself up to an *idle gossiping* conversation ? Why he lives in foolish friendships for particular persons, that neither want

nor deserve any particular kindness? If you ask him why he never puts his *conversation*, his *time*, and *fortune*, under the rules of religion, Julius has no more to say for himself than the most disorderly person. For the whole tenor of Scripture lies as directly against such a life, as against *debauchery* and *intemperance*. He that lives in such a course, lives no more according to the religion of Jesus Christ, than he that lives in gluttony and intemperance.

If a man were to tell Julius that there was no occasion for so much constancy at prayers, and that he might neglect the service of the church, as the generality of people do, Julius would think such a one to be no Christian, and that he ought to avoid his company: but if a person only tell him, that he may live as the generality of the world does, that he may enjoy himself as others do, that he may spend his *time* and *money* as people of fashion do, that he may conform to the follies and frailties of the generality, and gratify his temper and passions as most people do, Julius never suspects that man to want a Christian spirit, or that he is doing the devil's work.

6. The short of the matter is this: either reason and religion prescribe *rules* and *ends* to all the ordinary actions of our lives, or they do not: if they do, then it is as necessary to govern all our actions by those rules, as it is necessary to worship God. For if religion teaches us any thing concerning *eating* and *drinking*, or spending our *time* and *money*; if it teaches us how we

are to *use* the world ; if it tells us what tempers we are to have in *common* life, how we are to be disposed toward all people, how we are to behave toward the *sick*, the *poor*, the *old*, and *destitute* ; if it tells us whom we are to treat with a particular love, whom we are to regard with a particular esteem ; if it tells us how we are to treat our enemies, and how we are to deny ourselves, he must be very weak that can think these parts of religion are not to be observed with as much *exactness* as any doctrines that relate to prayers.

7. Our blessed Saviour and his apostles are wholly taken up in doctrines that relate to *common life*. They call us to differ in every *temper* and *way* of life from the spirit and way of the world : to renounce all its goods, to fear none of its evils, to reject its joys, and have no value for its happiness : to be as *new-born babes*, that are born into a new state of things ; to live as pilgrims, in spiritual watching, in holy fear, aspiring after another life ; to take up our daily cross ; to deny ourselves ; to profess the blessedness of mourning ; to seek the blessedness of poverty of spirit ; to forsake the pride and vanity of riches ; to take no thought for the morrow ; to live in the profoundest state of humility ; to rejoice in sufferings ; to reject the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ; to bear injuries ; to forgive and bless our enemies, and to love mankind as God loveth them ; to give up our whole hearts and affections to God ; and strive to enter through the strait gate into a life of eternal glory.

8. Thus it is in all virtues and holy tempers ; they are not *ours*, unless they be the virtues and tempers of our *ordinary life*. So that Christianity is so far from leaving us to live in the common ways of life, conforming to the folly of customs, and gratifying the passions and tempers which the spirit of the world delights in ; it is so far from indulging us in any of these things, that all its virtues, which it makes necessary to salvation, are only so many ways of living, contrary to the world in all the common actions of our life.

If our common life is not a common course of *humility, self-denial, renunciation* of the world, *poverty* of spirit, and *heavenly* affection, we do not live the life of Christians.

9. But yet, though it is thus plain, that this, and this alone, is Christianity, a uniform, open and visible practice of all these virtues ; yet it is as plain, that there is little or nothing of this to be found, even among the better sort of people. You see them often at church ; but look into their lives, and you see them just the same sort of people as others are. The difference that you find betwixt them is only the difference of their natural tempers. They have the same *taste* of the world, the same worldly cares, fears, and joys ; they have the same *turn* of mind, are equally *vain* in their desires. You see the same vanity of *dress*, the same *self-love* and indulgence, the same foolish *friendships* and groundless *hatreds*, the same *levity* of mind and *trifling* spirits, the same *idle* dispositions, and

vain ways of spending their time in visiting and conversation, as in the rest of the world, that make no pretences to devotion.

10. I do not mean this comparison betwixt people seemingly good and professed *rakes*, but betwixt people of sober lives. Let us take an instance in two modest women: let it be supposed that one of them is careful of times of devotion, through a sense of duty; and that the other is at church seldom or often, just as it happens. Now it is a very easy thing to see this difference betwixt these persons. But, can you find any further difference betwixt them? Can you find that their *common life* is of a different kind? Are not the *tempers*, and *customs*, and *manners* of the one, of the same kind as of the other? Do they live as if they belonged to different worlds, had different views in their heads, and different rules and measures of all their actions? Have they not the same *goods* and *civils*? Are they not pleased and displeased in the *same manner*, and for the same things? Do they not live in the same course of life? Does one seem to be of this world, looking at the things that are temporal, and the other to be of another world, looking wholly at the things that are eternal? Does the one live in pleasure, delighting herself in show or dress, and the other live in self denial, renouncing every thing that looks like vanity, either of person, dress, or carriage? Does the one trifle away her time? And does the other study all the arts of improving it, living in prayer and watching, and such

good works as may make all her time turn to her advantage, and be placed to her account at the last day? Is the one careless of expense, and glad to adorn herself with every costly ornament of dress? And does the other consider her fortune as a talent given her by God, which is to be improved religiously, and no more to be spent in vain and needless ornaments than it is to be buried in the earth?

Where must you look, to find one person of religion differing in this manner from another that has none? And yet if they do not differ in these things, can it with any sense be said, the one is a good Christian and the other not?

11. Take another instance among the men. Leo has a great deal of good nature, has kept what they call good company, hates every thing that is false and base, is very generous to his friends; but has concerned himself so little with religion, that he hardly knows the difference between a Jew and a Christian.

Eusebius, on the other hand, has had early impressions of religion and buys books of devotion. He can talk of all the feasts and fasts of the church, and knows the names of most men that have been eminent for piety. You never hear him swear, and when he talks of religion, he talks of it as a matter of great concern.

Here you see, that one person has religion enough, to be reckoned a pious Christian; and the other is so far from all appearance of religion, that he may fairly be reckoned a heathen. And yet, if you look into their common life, if

you examine their ruling tempers in the greatest articles of life, you will find the least difference imaginable. Consider them with regard to the use of the world, because that is what every body can see. Now to have right notions and tempers with regard to the world, is as essential to religion, as to have right notions of God. And it is as possible for a man to worship a crocodile, and yet be a pious man, as to have his affections set upon this world, and yet be a good Christian.

But now, if you consider Leo and Eusebius in this respect, you will find them exactly alike ; seeking, using, and enjoying all that can be got in this world, in the same manner. You will find *riches, prosperity, pleasures, and honour*, are just as much the happiness of Eusebius as they are of Leo. And yet, if Christianity has not changed a man's temper, with relation to these things, what has it done for him ?

12. Every one capable of reflection, must have observed, that this is generally the state, even of devout people, whether *men* or *women*. You may see them different from other people, as to *times* and *places* of prayer, but like the rest of the world in all the other parts of their lives ; that is, adding *Christian* devotion to a *heathen life*. I have the authority of our blessed Saviour for this remark, where he says, "Take no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed ? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek." But if to be thus affected even with the ne-

cessary things of this life, shows that we are not of a *Christian spirit*, but a *heathen*; surely, to enjoy the vanity and folly of the world as they did, to be like them in the main tempers of our lives, in sensual pleasures and diversions, in the vanity of dress, the love of show and greatness, or any other gaudy distinctions of fortune, is a much greater sign of a heathen temper; and consequently, they who add devotion to such a life, must be said to *pray as Christians, but live as heathens.*

CHAPTER II.

An inquiry into the reason why the generality of Christians fall so short of the holiness and devotion of Christianity.

1. It may now be reasonably inquired, how it is, that the lives, even of the better sort of people, are thus strangely contrary to the principles of Christianity?

But before I give a direct answer, I desire it may be inquired, how it is, that *swearing* is so common amongst Christians? It is indeed yet not so common among *women*, as among *men*; but among men this sin is so common, that perhaps there are more than two in three that are guilty of it through the whole course of their lives; swearing *more or less*, just as it happens; some constantly, others only now and then. Now I ask how comes it, that two in three of

the men are guilty of so gross a sin as this is? There is neither ignorance nor human infirmity to plead for it: it is against an express commandment, and the most plain doctrine of our blessed Saviour.

Do but find the reason why the generality of men live in this notorious vice, and you will have found the reason, why the generality, even of the better sort of people, live so contrary to Christianity.

2. Now the reason of common swearing is this; it is because men have not so much as *the intention to please God in all their actions*. For, let a man but have so much piety as to *intend to please God in all the actions of his life, as the happiest and best thing in the world*, and then he will never swear more. It will be as impossible for him to swear, whilst he feels *this intention* within himself, as it is impossible for a man that intends to please his prince, to go up and abuse him to his face.

3. It is but a small part of piety to have such an *intention* as this; and he has no reason to look upon himself as a disciple of Christ who is not thus far advanced. And yet it is purely for want of this degree of piety, that you see such a mixture of sin and folly in the lives even of the better sort of people. It is for want of this intention, that you see men that profess religion, yet live in swearing and sensuality; that you see clergymen given to pride and covetousness, and worldly enjoyments. It is for want of this intention, that you see women that profess de-

votion, yet living in all the vanity and folly of dress, and wasting their time in idleness and pleasures, in all such instances as their estates will reach. For, let but a woman feel her heart full of this intention, and she will find it as impossible to patch or paint, as to curse or swear ; she will no more desire to shine at balls and assemblies, or make a figure among those that are most finely dressed, than she will desire to dance upon a rope to please spectators : she will know, that the one is as far from the wisdom and excellency of the Christian spirit as the other.

4. It was this general intention that made the primitive Christians such eminent instances of piety. And if you will here stop, and ask yourself, why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you, it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it. You observe the same Sunday worship that they did ; and you are strict in it, because it is your full intention to be so. And when you as fully intend to be like them in their common life ; when you intend to please God in all your actions, you will find it as impossible as to be strictly exact in the service of the church. And when you have this *intention to please God in all your actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world*, you will find in you as great an aversion to any thing that is vain and impertinent in common life, whether of business or pleasure, as you now have to any thing that is profane. You will be as fearful of living in any

foolish way, either of spending your time, or your fortune, as you are now fearful of neglecting the public worship.

5. Now, who that wants this general intention, can be reckoned a Christian? And yet if it was among Christians, it would change the whole face of the world; exemplary holiness would be as common and visible, as buying and selling, or any trade in life.

Let a clergyman be thus pious, and he will converse as if he had been brought up by an apostle. He will no more think and talk of noble preferment, than of noble eating, or a glorious chariot. He will no more complain of the frowns of the world, or a small cure, or the want of a patron, than he will complain of a laced coat, or a running horse. Let him but *intend to please God in all his actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world*, and then he will know that there is nothing noble in a clergyman, but burning zeal for the salvation of souls; nor any thing poor in his profession but idleness and a worldly spirit. Again, let a tradesman but have this intention, and it will make him a saint in his shop; his every day business will be a course of wise and reasonable actions, made holy to God, by being done in obedience to his will and pleasure. He will buy and sell, and labour and travel, because by so doing he can do some good to himself and others; but then, as nothing can please God but what is wise, and reasonable, and holy; so he will neither buy nor sell, nor labour in any

manner, but such as is wise, and reasonable, and holy. He will therefore consider, not what arts, or methods, will make him richer and greater than his brethren, or remove him from a shop to a life of state and pleasure ; but he will consider what arts, what methods, can make worldly business most acceptable to God, and make a life of trade a life of holiness, devotion and piety. This will be the temper and spirit of every tradesman ; he cannot stop short of these degrees of piety, whenever it is his *intention to please God in all his actions, as the best and happiest thing in the world.*

6. Again, let the gentleman of fortune but have this intention, and it will carry him from every appearance of evil, to every instance of piety and goodness.

He cannot live by chance, or as humour or fancy carries him, because he knows that nothing can please God but a wise and regular course of life. He cannot live in idleness and indulgence, in sports and gaming, in vain expenses and high living, because these things cannot be turned into means of holiness, or made so many parts of a wise and religious life.

As he thus removes, from all appearance of evil, so he aspires after every instance of goodness. He does not ask what is allowable and pardonable, but what is commendable and praiseworthy. He does not ask whether God will forgive the folly of our lives, the madness of our pleasures, the vanity of our expenses, and the careless consumption of our time ; but he asks

whether God is pleased with these things; or whether these are the appointed ways of gaining his favour. He does not inquire, whether it be pardonable to hoard up money, to adorn ourselves with diamonds, and gild our chariots, whilst the widow and the orphan, the sick and the prisoner, want to be relieved; but he asks whether God has required these things at our hands; whether we shall be called to account at the last day for the neglect of them? Because it is not his intent to live in such ways as God may perhaps pardon, but in such as we know God will infallibly reward.

He will not therefore look at the lives of Christians, to learn how he ought to spend his estate, but he will look into the Scripture, and make every doctrine, parable, or instruction that relates to rich men, a law to himself in the use of it.

He will have but one rule for charity, and that will be, to spend all that he can that way; because the Judge of quick and dead hath said, that all that is so given, is given to him.

7. Let not any one look upon this as an imaginary description, that looks fine in the notion, but cannot be put in practice. For it is so far from being impracticable, that it has been practised by great numbers of Christians in former ages, who were glad to turn their whole estates into a constant course of charity. And it is so far from being impossible now, that if we can find any Christians that sincerely *intend to please God in all their actions, as the best and happiest*

thing in the world, whether they be young or old, single or married, men or women, it will be impossible for them to do otherwise. This one principle will infallibly carry them to this, and they will find themselves unable to stop short of it.

For how is it possible for a man that intends to please God in the use of his money, because he judges it to be his greatest happiness, to bury his money in needless impertinent finery, in covering himself or his horses with gold, whilst there are any works of piety or charity to be done with it, or any ways of spending it well?

8. I have chosen to explain this matter, by appealing to this intention, because it makes the case so plain, and because every one may see it in the clearest light, and feel it in the strongest manner, only by looking into his own heart. For it is as easy for every person to know whether he intends to please God in all his actions, as for any servant to know whether this be his intention toward his master. Every one can as easily tell how he lays out his money, and whether he considers how to please God in it, as he can tell where his estate is, and whether it be in money or in land. So that here is no plea left for ignorance or frailty, as to this matter: every body is in the light, and every body has power. And no one can fail, but he that is not so much a Christian, as to intend to please God in the use of his estate.

9. You see two persons, one is regular in public and private prayer, the other is not. Now

the reason of this difference is not this, that one has strength to observe prayer, and the other has not ; but the reason is this, that one intends to please God in the duties of devotion, and the other has no intention about it. The case is the same in the right or wrong use of our time and money. You see one person throwing away his time in sleep and idleness, in visiting, and diversions, and his money in the most vain and unreasonable expenses. You see another careful of every day, dividing his hours by rules of reason and religion, and spending all his money in works of charity. Now the difference is not owing to this, that one has strength to do thus, and the other has not ; but to this, that one intends to please God in the right use of all his time, and all his money, and the other has no intention about it.

10. Here therefore let us judge ourselves sincerely ; let us not vainly content ourselves with the common disorders of our lives, the vanity of our expenses, the folly of our diversions, the idleness of our lives, and the wasting of our time, fancying that these are such imperfections as we fall into through the unavoidable weakness of our natures ; but let us be assured that these disorders of our common life are owing to this, that we have not so much Christianity as to intend to please God in all our actions, as the best and happiest thing in the world. So that we must not look upon ourselves in a state of common imperfection, but in such a state as wants the first and most fundamental principle of Chris-

tianity, viz., *an intention to please God in all our actions.*

11. And if any one were to ask himself how it comes to pass, that there are any degrees of sobriety which he neglects, any method of charity which he does not follow, any rules of redeeming time which he does not observe, his own heart will tell him, that it is because he never intended to be so exact in those duties. For whenever we fully intend it, it is as possible to conform to all this regularity of life, as it is possible for a man to observe times of prayer.

So that the fault does not lie here, that we desire to be good and perfect, but through the weakness of our nature fall short of it; but we have not piety enough to intend to be as good as we can, or to please God in all our actions. This we see is plainly the case of him that spends his time in sports, when he should be at church; it is not his want of power, but his want of intention, or desire to be there.

12. And the case is plainly the same in every other folly of human life. She that spends her time and money in the unreasonable ways and fashions of the world, does not do so because she wants power to be wise and religious in the management of her time and money, but because she has no intention or desire of being so. When she feels this intention, she will find it as possible to act up to it, as to be strictly sober and chaste, because it is her care and desire to be so.

13. This doctrine does not suppose, that we have no need of divine grace, or that it is in our

own power to make ourselves perfect. It only supposes, that through the want of a sincere intention of pleasing God in all our actions, we fall into such irregularities of life, as by the ordinary means of grace we should have power to avoid. And that we have not that perfection, which our present state of grace makes us capable of, because we do not so much as intend to have it.

It only teaches us, that the reason why you see no real self-denial, no eminent charity, no profound humility, no heavenly affection, no true contempt of the world, no Christian meekness, no sincere zeal, no eminent piety in the common lives of Christians, is this, because they do not so much as intend to be exact and exemplary in these virtues.

CHAPTER III.

Of the great danger and folly of not intending to be as eminent as we can, in the practice of all Christian virtues.

1. ALTHOUGH the goodness of God and his rich mercy in Christ Jesus are a sufficient assurance to us, that he will be merciful to our unavoidable weaknesses, that is, to such failings as are the effect of ignorance or surprise; yet we have no reason to expect the same mercy toward those sins which we live in, through a want of intention to avoid them.

For instance, a common swearer, who dies in

that guilt, seems to have no title to the Divine mercy ; because he can no more plead any weakness in his excuse, than the man that hid his talent in the earth, could plead his want of strength to keep it out of the earth.

2. But if this be right reasoning in the case of a common swearer, that his sin is not to be reckoned a pardonable frailty, because he has no weakness to plead in its excuse ; why do not we as much condemn every other error of life, that has no more weakness to plead in its excuse than common swearing ?

For if this be so bad, because it might be avoided, if we did but sincerely intend it, must not all other erroneous ways of life be guilty, if we live in them, not through weakness and inability, but because we never sincerely intended to avoid them ? For instance, you perhaps have made no progress in the most important Christian virtues, in humility and charity. Now, if your failure in these is owing to your want of intention of performing them in any true degree, have you not as little to plead for yourself ? And are you not as much without all excuse as the common swearer ?

3. Why, therefore, do not you press these things home upon your conscience : why do you not think it as dangerous for you to live in such defects as are in your power to amend, as it is dangerous for a common swearer to live in the breach of that duty, which it is in his power to observe ? Is not want of a sincere intention, as blameable in one case as in another ?

You, it may be, are as far from Christian perfection as the common swearer is from keeping the third commandment. Are you not therefore as much condemned by the doctrines of the gospel, as the swearer is by the third commandment ?

You perhaps will say, that all people fall short of the perfection of the gospel. But this is nothing to the purpose : for the question is not, whether gospel perfection can be fully attained ; but whether you come as near it as a sincere intention and careful diligence can carry you ? Whether you are not in a much lower state than you might be, if you sincerely intended to advance yourself in all Christian virtues ?

4. If your defects in piety, humility, and charity, are owing to your want of sincere intention to be as eminent as you can in these virtues, then you leave yourself as much without excuse, as he that lives in the sin of swearing, through the want of a sincere intention to depart from it.

The salvation of our souls is set forth in Scripture as a thing of difficulty, that requires all our diligence, that is to be “ worked out with fear and trembling.”

We are told, “ strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” That “ many are called but few are chosen.” And that many will miss of their salvation, who seem to have taken some pains to obtain it. “ Strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.”

Here our blessed Lord commands us to strive to enter in, because many will fail, who only seek to enter. By which we are plainly taught, that religion is a state of labour and striving, and that many will fail of their salvation ; not because they took no pains or care about it, but because they did not take care and pains enough ; they only sought, but did not strive to enter in.

Every Christian therefore should as well examine his life by these doctrines, as by the commandments : for these doctrines are as plain marks of our condition as the commandments are.

For if salvation is only given to those who strive for it, then it is as reasonable for me to consider, whether my course of life be a course of striving to obtain it, as to consider whether I am keeping any of the commandments.

5. If my religion is only a formal compliance with those modes of worship that are in fashion where I live, if it costs me no pains or trouble, if it lays me under no rules and restraints, if I have no careful thoughts about it, is it not great weakness to think that I am “striving to enter in at the strait gate ?”

If I am seeking every thing that can delight my senses, and regale my appetites, spending my time and fortune in pleasures, in diversions, and worldly enjoyments ; a stranger to watchings, fastings, prayers, and mortifications, how can it be said, that I am “working out my salvation with fear and trembling ?”

If I use the world and worldly enjoyments, as the generality of people do, and in all ages have

done, why should I think that I am amongst those few, who are walking in the narrow way to heaven ?

And yet, if the way is narrow, if none can walk in it but those that strive, is it not as necessary for me to consider, whether the way I am in be narrow enough, or the labour I take be a sufficient striving, as to consider whether I sufficiently observe the second or third commandment ?

6. The measure of our love to God seems in justice to be the measure of our love of every virtue. We are to love and practice it “ with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength.” And when we cease to live with this regard to virtue, we live below our nature, and instead of being able to plead our infirmities, we stand chargeable with wilful negligence.

It is for this reason that we are exhorted to work out our salvation with “ fear and trembling ;” because unless our heart and passions are eagerly bent upon the work of our salvation, unless holy fears animate our endeavours, and keep our consciences tender about every part of our duty, constantly examining how we live, and how fit we are to die, we shall in all probability sit down in such a course of life, as will never carry us to the rewards of heaven.

And he that considers that a just God can only make such allowances as are suitable to his justice, that our works are all to be examined by fire, will find fear and trembling are proper

tempers for those that are drawing near to so great a trial.

Now this is not intended to possess people's minds, with a scrupulous anxiety ; but to fill them with a just fear of living in the neglect of such virtues as they will want at the day of judgment.

It is only desiring them to be so apprehensive of their state, so earnest after higher degrees of piety, and so fearful of falling short of happiness, as the great apostle St. Paul was, when he thus wrote to the Philippians :

“ Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And then he adds, “ Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded.”

But if the apostle thought it necessary for those who were in his state of perfection to be thus minded ; that is, thus labouring, pressing, and aspiring after some degrees of holiness, to which they were not then arrived ; surely it is much more necessary for us to be thus minded ; thus earnest and striving after such degrees of a holy life, as we have not yet attained.

7. The best way for any one to know how much he ought to aspire after holiness, is to ask himself, how much he thinks will make him easy at the hour of death ?

Now any man that dares put this question to

himself, will be forced to answer, that at death, every one will wish, he had been as perfect as human nature can be.

Is not this sufficient to put us, not only upon wishing but labouring after all that perfection which we shall then lament the want of? Is it not excessive folly to be content with such a course of piety as we already know cannot content us, at a time when we shall so want it, as to have nothing else to comfort us? How can we carry a severer condemnation against ourselves, than to believe that at the hour of death, we shall want the virtues of the saints, and wish that we had been amongst the first servants of God, and yet take no methods of arriving at their height of piety, whilst we are alive?

8. Though this is an absurdity that we can pass over, whilst the health of our bodies, the passions of our minds, the noise and hurry, and pleasures, and business of the world, lead us on with eyes that see not; yet at death it will appear before us in a dreadful magnitude: it will haunt us like a dismal ghost; and our consciences will never let us take our eyes from it.

We see in worldly matters, what a torment self condemnation is: and how hardly a man is able to forgive himself, when he has brought himself into any calamity or disgrace, purely by his own folly. The affliction is made doubly tormenting, if he is forced to charge it all upon himself, as his own act and deed, against the reason of things, and contrary to the advice of his friends.

Now by this we may in some degree guess, how terrible that self condemnation will be, when a man shall find himself in the misery of death, under the severity of a self-condemning conscience ; charging all his distress upon his own folly and madness, against the sense and reason of his own mind, against all the doctrines and precepts of religion, and contrary to all the instructions, calls, and warnings, both of God and man.

9. Penitens was a busy, notable tradesman, and very prosperous in his dealings, but died in the thirty-fifth year of his age.

A little before his death, when the doctors had given him over, some of his neighbours came one evening to see him ; at which time he spoke thus to them :

I see, my friends, the tender concern you have for me, by the grief that appears in your countenances ; and I know the thoughts that you have about me. You think how melancholy a case it is, to see so young a man, and in such flourishing business, delivered up to death. And perhaps, had I visited any of you in my condition, I should have had the same thoughts of you.

But now, my friends, my thoughts are no more like your thoughts, than my condition is like yours.

It is no trouble to me now to think, that I am to die young, or before I have raised an estate.

These things are now sunk into such mere nothings, that I have no name little enough to call them by. For if in a few days or hours, I

am to leave this carcass to be buried in the earth, and to find myself either for ever happy in the favour of God, or eternally separated from all light and peace, can any words sufficiently express the littleness of every thing else ?

Is there any dream like the dream of life, which amuses us with the disregard of these things ? Is there any folly like the folly of our manly state, which is too wise and busy to be at leisure for these reflections ?

10. When we consider death as a misery, we only think of it as a miserable separation from the enjoyment of this life. We seldom mourn over an old man that dies rich ; but we lament the young that are taken away in the progress of their fortune. You yourselves look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepared to meet the Judge of quick and dead, but that I am to leave a prosperous trade in the flower of my life.

This is the wisdom of our manly thoughts : and yet what folly of the silliest children is so great as this ?

For what is there miserable in death, but the consequence of it ? When a man is dead, what does any thing signify to him, but the state he is then in ?

Our poor friend Lepidus died, you know, as he was dressing himself for a feast. Do you think it is now part of his trouble, that he did not live till that entertainment was over ? Feasts, and business, and pleasures, and enjoyments, seem great things to us, whilst we think of nothing

else ; but as soon as we add death to them, they all sink into an equal littleness ; and the soul that is separated from the body, no more laments the loss of business, than the losing of a feast.

If I am now going into the joys of God, could there be any reason to grieve, that this happened to me before I was forty years of age ? Could it be a sad thing to go to heaven, before I had made a few more bargains, and stood a little longer behind a counter ?

And if I am to go amongst lost spirits, could there be any reason to be content, that this did not happen to me till I was old, and full of riches ? If good angels were ready to receive my soul, could it be any grief to me, that I was dying upon a poor bed in a garret ?

And if God has delivered me up to evil spirits, to be dragged by them to places of torment, could it be any comfort to me, that they found me upon a bed of state ?

11. When you are as near death as I am, you will know that all the different states of life, whether of youth or age, riches or poverty, greatness or meanness, signify no more to you, than whether you die in a poor or stately apartment.

The greatness of those things which follow death, makes all that go before it sink into nothing.

Now that everlasting happiness or misery is come so near, all the enjoyments and prosperities of life seem as vain and insignificant, and to have no more to do with my happiness than the clothes that I wore before I could speak.

But, my friends, how am I surprised, that I have not always had these thoughts? For what is there in the terrors of death, in the vanities of life, or the necessities of piety, but what I might have as easily and fully seen in any part of my life?

What a strange thing is it, that a little health, or the poor business of a shop, should keep us so senseless of these great things that are coming so fast upon us!

12. Just as you came into my chamber, I was thinking with myself, what numbers of souls there are now in the world in my condition at this very time, surprised with a summons to the other world; some taken from their shops and farms, others from their sports and pleasures, these at suits at law, those at gaming tables, some on the road, others at their own fire-sides, and all seized at an hour when they thought not of it; frightened at the approach of death, confounded at the vanity of all their labours, designs and projects, astonished at the folly of their past lives, and not knowing which way to turn their thoughts, to find any comfort; their consciences flying in their faces, bringing all their sins to remembrance, presenting them with the sight of the angry Judge, the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched, the gates of hell, the powers of darkness, and the bitter pains of eternal death.

O my friends! bless God that you are not of this number, that you have time and strength so to employ yourselves, as may bring you peace at the last.

13. You perhaps, when you consider that I have lived free from scandal, and debauchery, and in the communion of the church, wonder to see me so full of remorse and self condemnation at the approach of death.

It is true, I have lived in the communion of the church, and frequented its service on Sundays when I was not too idle, or otherwise disposed of by my business and pleasures: but then, my conformity to the public worship has been rather a thing of course, than from any real intention of glorifying God; had it not been so, I had been more devout when there, and more fearful of ever neglecting it.

14. But the thing that now surprises me above all wonders, is this, that I never had so much as a general intention of living up to the piety of the gospel. This never so much as entered into my heart. I never once in my life considered whether my way of life was such as would procure me the mercy of God at this hour.

How easy a thing would salvation be, if it could fall into my careless hands, who have never had so much serious thought about it, as about any one common bargain that I have made?

Do you think any thing can astonish and confound a dying man like this? What pain do you think a man must feel, when his conscience lays all this folly to his charge, when it shows him how regular, exact, and wise he has been in small matters, that are passed away like a dream, and how stupid and senseless he has

lived without any reflection, in things of such eternal moment, as no heart can sufficiently conceive them ?

O my friends ! a careless life, unconcerned and inattentive to the duties of religion, is so without all excuse, so unworthy of the mercy of God, such a shame to the sense and reason of our minds, that I can hardly conceive a greater punishment, than for a man to be thrown into the state that I am in, to reflect upon it.

Penitens was here going on, but had his mouth stopped by a convulsion, which never suffered him to speak any more. He lay convulsed for about twelve hours, and then gave up the ghost.

CHAPTER IV.

We can please God in no state or employment, but by intending and devoting it all to his glory.

1. HAVING already stated the general nature of devotion, and shown that it implies not any form of prayer, but a certain form of life, that is offered to God, not at any particular times or places, but every where and in every thing ; I shall now descend to some particulars, and show how we are to devote our labour and employment, our time and fortunes to God.

As a Christian should consider every place as holy, because God is there ; so he should look upon every part of his life as a matter of holiness, because it is to be offered to God.

The profession of a clergyman is a holy profession, because it is a ministration in holy things. But worldly business is to be made holy, by being done as a service to God, and in conformity to his will.

For as all men, and all things in the world, as truly belong unto God, as any places, things, or persons, that are devoted to divine service ; so all things are to be used, and all persons are to act in their several states for the glory of God.

Men of business therefore must not look upon themselves as at liberty to live to themselves, to sacrifice to their own humours and tempers, because their employment is of a worldly nature : but they must consider, that as the world, and all worldly professions, as truly belong to God as persons and things that are devoted to the altar ; so it is as much the duty of men in worldly business to live wholly unto God, as it is the duty of those who are devoted to divine service.

2. As the whole world is God's ; so the whole world is to act for God. As all men have the same relation to God, as all men have all their powers and faculties from God ; so all men are obliged to act for God with all their powers and faculties.

As all things are God's, so all things are to be used and regarded as the things of God. For men to abuse things on earth, and live to themselves, is the same rebellion against God, as for angels to abuse things in heaven ; because God is just the same Lord of all on earth, as he is of all in heaven.

Things may, and must differ in their use ; but yet they are all to be used according to the will of God.

Men may and must differ in their employments ; but yet they must all act for the same ends, as dutiful servants of God, in the right and pious performance of their several callings.

3. Clergymen must live wholly unto God in one particular way ; that is, in the exercise of holy offices, in the ministration of prayers and sacraments, and a zealous distribution of spiritual goods.

But men of other employments are, in their particular ways, as much obliged to act as the servants of God, and live wholly unto him in their several callings.

This is the only difference between clergymen and people of other callings.

When it can be shown, that men may be vain, covetous, sensual, worldly minded, or proud in the exercise of their worldly business, then it will be allowable for clergymen to indulge the same tempers in their sacred professions. For though these tempers are most odious and most criminal in clergymen, who besides their baptismal vow, have a second time devoted themselves to God, to be his servants, not in the common offices of life, but in the service of the most holy things ; and who are therefore to keep themselves as separate from the common life of other men, as a church or an altar is to be kept separate from houses and tables of common use ; yet as all Christians are by their baptism devoted to

God and made professors of holiness; so are they all in their several callings to live as holy and heavenly persons; doing every thing in their common life only in such a manner, as it may be received by God as a service done to him. For things spiritual and temporal, sacred and common, must, like men and angels, like heaven and earth, all conspire in the glory of God.

4. As there is but one God and Father of us all, whose glory gives light and life to every thing that lives, whose presence fills all places, whose power supports all beings, whose providence ruleth all events; so every thing that lives, whether in heaven or earth, whether they be thrones or principalities, men or angels, must all, with one spirit, live wholly to the praise and glory of this one God and Father of them all. Angels as angels, in their heavenly ministrations, but men as men, women as women, bishops as bishops, priests as priests, and deacons as deacons; some with things spiritual, and some with things temporal, offering to God the daily sacrifice of a reasonable life, wise actions, purity of heart, and heavenly affections.

This is the common business of all persons in this world. It is not left to any women in the world to trifle away their time in the follies and impertinences of a fashionable life, nor to any men to resign themselves up to worldly cares and concerns; it is not left to the rich, to gratify their passions in the indulgences and pride of life, nor to the poor, to vex and torment their hearts with the poverty of their state; but men and

women, rich and poor, inust, with bishops and priests, walk before God in the same wise and holy spirit, in the same denial of all vain tempers, and in the same discipline and care of their souls ; not only because they have all the same rational nature, and are servants of the same God, but because they all want the same holiness to make them fit for the same happiness. It is therefore absolutely necessary for all Christians, whether men or women, to consider themselves as persons that are devoted to holiness, and to order their common ways of life by such rules of reason and piety, as may turn it into a continual service to Almighty God.

5. As the glory of God is one and the same thing ; so whatever we do, suitable to it, must be done with one and the same spirit. That same temper of mind which makes our alms and devotions acceptable, must also make our labour, or employment, a proper offering to God. If a man pursues his business, that he may raise himself to figure and glory in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment ; he is acting under other masters, and has no more title to a reward from God, than he that gives alms that he may be seen of men. For vain and earthly desires are no more allowable in our employments, than in our alms and devotions. For these tempers of worldly pride, and vain glory, are not only evil, when they mix with our good works ; but they have the same evil nature, when they enter into our common business. If it were allowable to indulge covetous or vain

passions in our worldly employments, it would be allowable to be vain-glorious in our devotions. But as our alms and devotions are not an acceptable service, but when they proceed from a heart truly devoted to God ; so our common employment cannot be reckoned a service to him, but when it is performed with the same piety of heart.

6. Most of the employments of life are in their own nature lawful ; and all those that are so, may be made a substantial part of our duty to God, if we engage in them only so far, and for such ends, as are suitable to beings, that are to live above the world, all the time they live in the world. This is the only measure of our application to any worldly business ; let it be what it will, or where it will, it must have no more of our hands, our hearts, or our time, than is consistent with a hearty, daily, careful preparation of ourselves for another life. For as all Christians, as such, have renounced this world, to prepare themselves by daily devotion, and universal holiness, for an eternal state of quite another nature, they must look upon worldly employments as upon worldly wants, and bodily infirmities ; things not to be desired, but only to be endured, till death and the resurrection have carried us to an eternal state of real happiness.

7. Now he that does not look at the things of this life in this degree of littleness, cannot be said either to feel or believe the greatest truths of Christianity. For, if he thinks any thing great or important in human business, can he be said

to feel or believe those Scriptures which represent this life, and the greatest things of life, as bubbles, vapours, dreams, and shadows ?

If he thinks figure, and show, and worldly glory, to be any proper happiness of a Christian, how can he be said to feel or believe this doctrine, “Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake?” For surely, if there was any real happiness in figure and show, and worldly glory ; if these things deserved our thoughts and care, it could not be matter of the highest joy, when we are torn from them by persecution and sufferings. If therefore a man will so live, as to show, that he believes the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity, he must live above the world ; he must do the business of life, and yet live wholly unto God. And it is as necessary that people live in their employments with this temper, as it is necessary that their employment itself be lawful.

8. The husbandman that tilleth the ground, is employed in an honest business, that is necessary in life, and very capable of being made an acceptable service unto God ; but if he labours and toils not to serve any reasonable ends of life, but in order to have his plough made of silver, and to have his horses harnessed in gold, the honesty of his employment is lost as to him, and his labour becomes his folly.

A tradesman may justly think, that it is agreea-

ble to the will of God for him to sell such things as are useful in life ; such as help both himself and others to a reasonable support, and enable them to assist those that want to be assisted : but if instead of this, it be his chief end in it to grow rich, that he may live in figure and indulgence, and be able to retire from business to idleness and luxury, his trade, as to him, loses all its innocence, and is so far from being an acceptable service to God, that it is only a more plausible course of covetousness, self-love, and ambition. For such a one turns the necessities of his employment into pride and covetousness, just as the sot and epicure turn the necessities of eating and drinking into gluttony and drunkenness. Now he that is up early and late, that sweats and labours for those ends, that he may be some time or other rich, and live in pleasure and indulgence, lives no more to the glory of God than he that plays and games for the same ends. For though there is a great difference between trading and gaming ; yet most of that difference is lost, when men trade with the same desires and tempers, and for the same ends that others game. Charity and fine dressing are things very different ; but if men give alms for the same reasons that others dress fine, only to be seen and admired, charity is then but like the vanity of fine clothes. In like manner, if the same motives make some people industrious in their trades, which make others constant at gaming, such pains are but like the pains of gaming.

9. Callidus has traded above thirty years in

the greatest city of the kingdom ; he has been so many years constantly increasing his trade and his fortune. Every hour of the day is with him an hour of business ; and though he eats and drinks very heartily, yet every meal seems to be in a hurry, and he would say grace if he had time. Callidus ends every day at the tavern ; but has not leisure to be there till near nine o'clock. He is always forced to drink a good hearty glass, to drive thoughts of business out of his head, and make his spirits drowsy enough for sleep. He does business all the time that he is rising, and has settled several matters before he can get to his counting-house. His prayers are a short ejaculation or two, which he never misses in stormy weather, because he has always something or other at sea. Callidus will tell you with great pleasure, that he has been in this hurry for so many years, and that it must have killed him long ago, but that it has been a rule with him to get out of the town every Saturday, and make the Sunday a day of quiet and good refreshment in the country.

He is now so rich that he would leave off his business, and amuse his old age with building and furnishing a fine house in the country ; but that he is afraid he should grow melancholy, if he was to quit his business. He will tell you with great gravity, that it is a dangerous thing for a man that has been used to get money ever to leave it off. If thoughts of religion happen at any time to steal into his head, Callidus contents himself with thinking, that he never was a

friend to heretics and infidels ; that he has always been civil to the minister of his parish, and very often given something to the charity schools.

10. Now this way of life is at such distance from all the doctrines and discipline of Christianity, that no one can live in it through ignorance or frailty. Callidus can no more imagine, that "he is born again of the Spirit ;" * that he is in Christ a new creature ;" † that he lives "here as a stranger and pilgrim, setting his affections upon things above, and laying up treasures in heaven." ‡ He can no more imagine this, than he can think that he has been all his life an apostle, working miracles, and preaching the gospel.

It must also be owned that the generality of trading people, especially in great towns, are too much like Callidus. You see them all the week buried in business, unable to think of any thing else ; and then spending the Sunday in idleness and refreshment, in wandering into the country, in such visits and jovial meetings as make it often the worst day of the week.

11. Now they do not live thus because they cannot support themselves with less care and application to business ; but they live thus because they want to grow rich in their trades, and to maintain their families in some such figure and degree of finery, as a reasonable Christian has no occasion for. Take away but this temper, and then people of all trades will find them-

* John iii, 5. † 1 Peter ii, 11. ‡ Coloss. iii, 1.

selves at leisure to live every day like Christians, to be careful of every duty of the gospel, to live in a visible course of religion, and be every day strict observers both of private and public prayer.

Now the only way to do this, is for people to consider their trade as something that they are to devote to the glory of God, something that they are to do only in such a manner, as that they may make it a duty to him. Nothing can be right in business, that is not under these rules. The apostle commands servants, “to be obedient to their masters in singleness of heart as unto Christ ; not with eye service as men pleasers ; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.* With good will doing service as unto the Lord, and not unto men ?”†

This passage sufficiently shows, that all Christians are to live wholly unto God in every state and condition ; doing the work of their common calling in such a manner, and for such ends, as to make it a part of their service to God. For if poor slaves are not to comply with their business as men pleasers, if they are to look wholly unto God in all their actions, and serve in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord ; surely men of other conditions must be as much obliged to go through their business with the same singleness of heart ; not as pleasing the vanity of their own minds, not as gratifying their own selfish, worldly passions, but as the servants of God in all that they have to do.

* Eph. vi, 5.

† Coll. iii, 22, 23.

12. It is therefore absolutely certain, that no Christian is to enter any further into business, nor for any other ends, than such as he can, in singleness of heart, offer unto God as a reasonable service. For the Son of God, having redeemed us for this only end, that we should by a life of reason and piety, live to the glory of God: this is the only rule and measure for every order and state of life. Without this rule, the most lawful employment becomes a sinful state of life.

Take away this from the life of a clergyman, and his holy profession serves only to expose him to the greater damnation. Take away this from tradesmen, and shops are but so many houses of greediness and filthy lucre. Take away this from gentlemen, and the course of their life becomes a course of sensuality, pride, and wantonness. Take away this rule from our tables, and all falls into gluttony and drunkenness. Take away this measure from our dress and habits, and all is turned into such paint and glitter, and ridiculous ornaments, as are a real shame to the wearer. Take away this from the use of our fortunes, and you will find people sparing in nothing but charity. Take away this from our diversions, and you will find no sports too silly, nor any entertainments too vain and corrupt to be the pleasures of Christians.

13. If therefore we desire to live unto God, it is necessary to bring our whole life under this law, to make his glory the sole rule and measure of our acting in every employment of life. For there is no other true devotion, but this of living

devoted to God in the common business of our lives.

So that men must not content themselves with the lawfulness of their employments ; but must consider whether they use them, as they are to use every thing, as strangers and pilgrims, that are baptized into the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that are to follow him in a wise and heavenly course of life, in the mortification of all worldly desires, and in purifying and preparing their souls for the blessed enjoyment of God.

For to be vain, or proud, or covetous, or ambitious in the *common course* of our business, is as contrary to those holy tempers, as cheating and dishonesty.

If a glutton was to say, in excuse of his gluttony, that he only eats such things as it is lawful to eat, he would make as good an excuse for himself as the greedy, covetous, ambitious tradesman, that should say, he only deals in a lawful business. For as a Christian is not only required to be honest, but to be of a Christian spirit, and make his life an exercise of humility, repentance, and heavenly affection ; so all tempers contrary to these, are as contrary to Christianity, as cheating is contrary to honesty.

14. All this is only to show us the absolute necessity of such uniform piety, as extends to all the actions of common life.

That we must eat, and drink, and dress, and discourse according to the sobriety of the Christian spirit ; engage in no employments but such as we can truly devote unto God ; nor pursue

them any further, than conduces to the reasonable ends of a holy life.

That we must be honest, not only on particular occasions, and in such instances as are applauded in the world, easy to be performed, and free from danger or loss, but from such a living principle of justice, as makes us love truth and integrity in all its instances, and follow it through all dangers, and against all opposition ; as knowing that the more we pay for any truth, the better is our bargain, and that then our integrity becomes a pearl, when we have parted with all to keep it.

That we must be humble, not only in such instances as are expected in the world, or suitable to our tempers, or confined to particular occasions, but in such a spirit, as renders us meek and holy in the whole course of our lives, as shows itself in our dress, our person, our conversation, our enjoyment of the world, patience under injuries, submission to superiors, and condescension to those that are below us, and in all the outward actions of our lives.

That we must not only devote times and places to prayer, but be every where in the spirit of devotion, with hearts always set toward heaven, looking up to God in all our actions, and doing every thing as servants living in the world, as in a holy temple of God ; always worshipping him, though not with our lips, yet with the thankfulness of our hearts, the holiness of our actions, and the pious and charitable use of his gifts. That we must not only send up petitions

and thoughts now and then to heaven ; but must go through all our worldly business, with a heavenly spirit, as members of Christ's mystical body, that with new hearts and new minds, we are to turn an earthly life into a preparation for a life of greatness and glory in the kingdom of heaven.

15. Enough, I hope, has been said, to show you the necessity of thus introducing religion into all the actions of our common life, and of living and acting with the same regard to God in all that you do, as in your prayers and alms.

Eating is one of the lowest actions of our lives : it is common to us with mere animals : yet we see that the piety of all the ages of the world has turned this ordinary action of the animal life, into a piety to God, by making every meal to begin and end with devotion.

We see yet some remains of this custom in most Christian families ; some such little formality as shows you that people used to call upon God at the beginning and end of their meals. But indeed it is generally now so performed, as to look more like a mockery upon devotion, than any solemn application of the mind unto God. In one house you may perhaps see the head of the family just pulling off his hat ; in another, half getting up from his seat ; another shall, it may be, proceed so far, as to make as if he said something : but, however, these little attempts are the remains of some devotion that was formerly used at such times, and are proofs that religion has formerly belonged to this part of common life.

But to such a pass are we now come, that though the custom is still preserved, yet we can hardly bear with him that seems to perform it with any degree of seriousness, and look upon it as a sign of a fanatical temper, if a man has not done it as soon as he begins.

I would not be thought to plead for the necessity of long prayers at these times ; but thus much I think may be said, that if prayer is proper at these times, we ought to use such words as should show, that we solemnly appeal to God for such graces and blessings as are proper to the occasion ; otherwise the mock ceremony, instead of blessing our victuals, does but accustom us to trifle with devotion, and give us a habit of being unaffected with our prayers.

16. If every head of a family would, at the return of every meal, make a solemn adoration of God, in such a decent manner as becomes a devout mind, it would be very likely to teach him, that swearing, sensuality, gluttony and loose discourse, were very improper at those meals, which were to begin and end with devotion.

And if, in these days of general corruption, this part of devotion is fallen into a mock-ceremony, it must be imputed to this, that sensuality and intemperance have got too great power over us, to suffer us to add any devotion to our meals. But thus much must be said, that when we are as pious as Jews and heathens of all ages have been, we shall think it proper to pray at the beginning and end of our meals.

I have appealed to this pious custom of all

ages, as a proof of the reasonableness of the doctrine of this and the foregoing chapters ; that is, as a proof that religion is to be the rule and measure of all the actions of our ordinary life. For surely, if we are not to eat, but under such rules of devotion, it must appear, that whatever else we do, must in its proper way, be done with the same regard to the glory of God.

CHAPTER V.

Persons that are free from the necessity of labour and employments, are to consider themselves as devoted to God in a higher degree.

1. GREAT part of the world are free from the necessities of labour, and have their time and fortunes in their own disposal.

But as no one is to live in his employment according to his own humour, or to please his own fancy, but is to do all his business in such a manner as to make it a service unto God ; so those who have no particular employment, are so far from being left at liberty to live to themselves, to pursue their own humours, and spend their time and fortune as they please, that they are under greater obligations of living wholly unto God in all their actions.

The freedom of their state lays them under a greater necessity of always choosing and doing the best things.

They are those, of whom much will be required, because much is given unto them.

A slave can only live unto God in one particular way ; that is, by religious patience and submission in his state of slavery.

But all ways of holy living, all instances, and all kinds of virtue, lie open to those who are masters of themselves, their time, and their fortune.

It is as much the duty, therefore, of such persons, to make a wise use of their liberty, to devote themselves to all kinds of virtue, to aspire after every thing that is holy and pious, and to please God in the highest and most perfect manner, as it is the duty of a slave to be resigned unto God in his state of slavery.

2. You are no labourer or tradesman, you are neither merchant nor soldier ; consider yourself therefore, as placed in a state, in some degree like that of good angels, who are sent into the world as ministering spirits, for the general good of mankind, to assist, protect, and minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

For the more you are free from the common necessities of men, the more you are to imitate the higher perfections of angels.

Had you, Serena, been obliged to wash clothes for your maintenance, or to wait upon some mistress, that demanded all your labour, it would be your duty to glorify God, by such humility, obedience, and faithfulness, as might adorn that state of life.

It would then be recommended to your care, to improve that one talent to its greatest height. That when the time came for mankind to be rewarded for their labours by the great Judge of

quick and dead, you might be received with a *well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

But as God has given you five talents, as he has placed you above the necessities of life, as he has left you in the happy liberty of choosing the most exalted ways of virtue ; as he has left you nothing to do, but to make the best use of a variety of blessings, to make the best of a short life, to study your own perfection, the honour of God, and the good of your neighbour ; so it is now your duty to inquire how the most eminent saints have lived, to study all the arts and methods of perfection, and to set no bounds to your love and gratitude to the bountiful Author of so many blessings.

3. It is now your duty to turn your five talents into five more, and to consider how your time, and leisure, and health, and fortune, may be made so many happy means of purifying your own soul, improving your fellow creatures, and of carrying you at last to the greatest heights of eternal glory.

As you have no mistress to serve, so let your own soul be the object of your daily care and attendance.

Nourish it with good works, give it peace in solitude, get it strength in prayer, make it wise with reading, enlighten it by meditation, make it tender with love, sweeten it with humility, enliven it with psalms and hymns, and comfort it with frequent reflections upon future glory. Keep it in the presence of God, and teach it to

imitate those guardian angels, which, though they attend on the lowest of mankind, yet "always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven."

This, Serena, is your profession. For as sure as God is one God, so sure it is, that he has but one command to all mankind, whether they be bond or free, rich or poor; and that is, to act up to the excellency of their nature, to live by reason, to walk in the light of religion, to glorify God in all his gifts, and dedicate every condition of life to his service.

This is the one common command of God to all mankind. If you have an employment, you are to be thus reasonable, and holy, in the exercise of it; if you have time and a fortune in your own power, you are to be thus reasonable, and holy, in the use of all your time, and all your fortune.

4. The right use of every talent, is the indispensable duty of every being that is capable of knowing right or wrong.

For the reason why we are to do any thing as unto God, and with regard to our relation to him, is the same reason why we are to do every thing as unto God, and with regard to this relation.

That which is a reason for our being wise and holy, in the discharge of all our business, is the same reason for our being wise and holy, in the use of all our money.

As we have always the same natures, and are every where the servants of the same God, as

every place is equally full of his presence, and every thing is equally his gift, so we must do every thing as the servants of God ; we must live in every place as in his presence ; we must use every thing, as that ought to be used which belongs to God.

Either this wisdom and devotion is to go through every way of life, or it is to go through no part of life.

If we might forget ourselves, or forget God ; if we might live by humour or fancy, in any thing, or at any time, or in any place, it would be as lawful to do the same in every thing, and every time, and every place.

5. If therefore some people fancy, that they must be grave and solemn at church, but may be silly and frantic at home : that they must live by some rule on the Sunday, but may spend other days by chance ; that they must have some times of prayer, but may waste the rest of their time as they please ; that they must give some money in charity, but may squander away the rest as they have a mind ; such people have not considered the nature of religion, nor the true reasons of piety. For he that upon principles of reason can tell, why it is good to be wise and heavenly minded at church, can tell that it is good to have the same tempers in all other places. He that knows why he should spend any time well, knows it is never allowable to throw any time away. He that rightly understands the reasonableness of charity, will know, that it can never be excusable to waste any of

our money in pride and folly, or in any needless expenses.

For every argument that shows the wisdom of charity, proves the wisdom of spending our fortune well. Every argument that proves the reasonableness of having times of prayer, shows the reasonableness of losing none of our time.

6. If any one can show, that we need not always act as in the divine presence, that we need not use every thing as the gift of God, that we need not always live by reason, and make religion the rule of all our actions, the same arguments would show, that we need never act as in the presence of God, nor make religion and reason the measure of any of our actions. If therefore we are to live to God at any time, or in any place, we are to live unto him at all times, and in all places. If we are to use any thing as the gift of God, we are to use every thing as his gift. If we are to do any thing by strict rules of reason and piety, we are to do every thing in the same manner. Because reason, and wisdom, and piety, are as much the best things at all times, and in all places, as they are the best things, at any time, or in any place.

If it is our glory and happiness to have a rational nature, that is endued with wisdom and reason, that is capable of imitating the Divine nature, then it must be our glory and happiness to improve our reason and wisdom, to act up to the excellency of our rational nature, and to imitate God in all our actions. They therefore who confine their religion to times and places,

and some little rules of retirement, who think that it is being too strict to introduce religion into common life, and make it give laws to all their actions and ways of living : they who think thus, not only mistake, but they mistake the whole nature of religion, who can think any part of their life is more easy, for being free from it. They may well be said to mistake the whole nature of wisdom, who do not think it desirable to be always wise. He has not learned the nature of piety, who thinks it too much to be pious in all his actions. He does not sufficiently understand what reason is, who does not earnestly desire to live in every thing according to it.

If we had a religion that consisted in absurd superstitions, that had no regard to the perfection of our nature, people might well be glad to have some part of their life excused from it. But as the religion of the gospel is only the refinement of our best faculties, as it only requires a life of the highest reason, as it only requires us to use this world, as in reason it ought to be used, to live in such tempers as are the glory of intelligent beings, to walk in such wisdom as exalts our nature, and to practise such piety, as will raise us to God ; who can think it grievous, to live always in the spirit of such a religion, to have every part of his life full of it, but he that would think it much more grievous to be as the angels of God in heaven ?

7. Further, as God is one and the same being, always acting like himself, and suitably to his own nature, so it is the duty of every being that

he has created, to live according to the nature that he has given it, and always to act like itself.

It is therefore an immutable law of God, that all rational beings should act reasonably in all their actions ; not at this time, or in that place, or upon this occasion, or in the use of some particular thing, but at all times, in all places, on all occasions, and in the use of all things.

When therefore any being that is endued with reason, does an unreasonable thing at any time, or in any place, or in the use of any thing, it sins against the great law of its nature, and against God, the author of that nature.

They, therefore, who plead for any foolish fashions, customs, and humours, for the misuse of our time, or money, plead for rebellion against our nature, for a rebellion against God, who has given us reason for no other end, than to make it the rule and measure of all our ways of life.

8. When therefore you are guilty of any folly, or extravagance, or indulge any vain temper, do not consider it as a small matter, but consider it as it is, acting contrary to your nature, and then you will see that there is nothing small, that is unreasonable : because all unreasonable ways are contrary to the nature of all rational beings.

The infirmities of human life make such food and raiment necessary for us, as angels do not want ; but it is no more allowable for us to turn these necessities into follies, and indulge ourselves in the luxury of food, or the vanities of dress, than it is allowable for angels to act below the dignity of their proper state. For a rea-

sonable life is as much the duty of all men, as it is the duty of all angels. These are not speculative flights, but plain and undenial laws, that are founded in the nature of rational beings, who, as such, are obliged to live by reason, and glorify God by a continual right use of their several talents. So that though men are not angels, yet they may know by what rules men are to act, by considering the state of angels. Our blessed Saviour has plainly turned our thoughts this way by making this petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." A plain proof that the obedience of men is to imitate the obedience of angels, and that rational beings on earth, are to live unto God, as rational beings in heaven live unto him.

9. When therefore you would represent to your mind, how Christians ought to live unto God, and by what degrees of wisdom and holiness they ought to use the things of this life, you must not look at the world, but you must look up to the society of angels, and think what wisdom and holiness is fit to prepare you for such a state of glory. You must look to all the highest precepts of the gospel, you must examine yourself by the spirit of Christ, you must think how departed souls would live, if they were again to act the short part of human life; and what degrees of wisdom and holiness you will wish for, when you are leaving the world.

10. And as Christianity consecrates all states and employments to God, as it requires us to aspire after universal obedience, doing and using

every thing as the servants of God, so are we more especially obliged to observe this exactness in the use of our estates and fortunes.

The reason is plain, if we only consider, that our estate is as much the gift of God, as our eyes or our hands, and is no more to be buried, or thrown away at pleasure, than we are to pull out our eyes, or throw away our limbs.

But besides this consideration, there are several other important reasons, why we should be exact in the use of our estates.

11. *First*, Because the manner of using our money enters so far into the business of every day, and makes so great a part of our common life, that our common life must be much of the same nature, as our common way of spending our estate. If reason and religion govern us in this, then reason and religion have got great hold of us ; but if humour, pride, and fancy, are the measures of our spending our estate, then humour, pride, and fancy, will have the direction of the greatest part of our life.

12. *Secondly*, Another reason is, because our money is capable of being used to the most excellent purposes, and is so great a means of doing good. If we waste it, we do not waste a trifle, that signifies little : but we waste that which might be as eyes to the blind, as a husband to the widow, as a father to the orphan. If a man had eyes, and hands, and feet, that he could give to those that wanted them ; if he should either lock them up in a chest, or please himself with some needless, or ridiculous use of them, instead

of giving them to his brethren that were blind and lame, should we not justly reckon him an inhuman wretch ? If he should rather choose to amuse himself with furnishing his house with those things, than to entitle himself to an eternal reward, by giving them to those that wanted eyes and hands, might we not justly reckon him mad ?

Now money has very much the nature of eyes and feet ; if we either lock it up in chests, or waste it in needless and ridiculous expenses, whilst the poor and the distressed want it for their necessary uses ; if we consume it in the ridiculous ornaments of apparel, whilst others are starving in nakedness, we are not far from the cruelty of him that chooses rather to adorn his house with the hands and eyes, than to give them to those that want them. If we indulge ourselves in such expensive enjoyments, to satisfy no real want, rather than to entitle ourselves to an eternal reward, by disposing of our money well, we are guilty of his madness, that rather chooses to lock up eyes and hands, than to make himself for ever blessed, by giving them to those that want them.

13. *Thirdly*, If we waste our money, we are not only guilty of making that useless, which is so powerful a means of doing good, but we turn this useful talent into a powerful means of corrupting ourselves ; because so far as it is spent wrong, so far it is spent in the support of some wrong temper, in gratifying some vain and unreasonable desires.

As wit and fine parts cannot be only lost, but

expose those that have them to greater follies, if they are not strictly devoted to piety ; so money, if it is not used strictly according to reason and religion, cannot only be trifled away, but it will betray people into greater follies, and make them live a more silly and extravagant life, than they would have done without it. If, therefore, you do not spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the hurt of yourself. You will act like a man that should refuse to give a cordial to a sick friend, though he could not drink it himself without inflaming his blood. For this is the case of superfluous money ; if you give it to those that want it, it is a cordial ; if you spend it upon yourself, in something that you do not want, it only inflames and disorders your mind, and makes you worse than you would be without it.

14. Consider again the forementioned comparison ; if the man that would not make a right use of spare eyes and hands, should, by continually trying to use them himself, spoil his own eyes and hands, we might accuse him of still greater madness.

Now this is truly the case of riches spent upon ourselves in vain and needless expenses : in trying to use them where they have no real use, we only use them to our hurt, in creating unreasonable desires, in nourishing ill tempers, in indulging our passions, and supporting a vain turn of mind. For high eating and drinking, fine clothes, and fine houses, state and equipage, gay pleasures and diversions, do all of them hurt

and disorder our hearts: they are the food and nourishment of all the folly and weakness of our nature, and are certain means to make us vain and worldly in our tempers; they are all of them the support of something, that ought not to be supported; they are contrary to that sobriety of heart, which relisheth divine things; they are like so many weights upon our mind, that make us less able, and less inclined to raise up our thoughts and affections to the things that are above.

So that money, thus spent, is not merely wasted, but spent to bad purposes; to the corruption of our hearts, and to make us less able to live up to the doctrines of the gospel. It is like keeping money from the poor, to buy poison for ourselves.

For so much as is spent in the vanity of dress, is so much laid out to fix vanity in our minds. So much as is laid out for idleness and indulgence, is so much given to render our hearts dull and sensual. So much as is spent in state and equipage, is so much spent to dazzle your own eyes, and render you the idol of your own imagination. And so in every thing, when you go from reasonable wants, you only support some unreasonable temper, some turn of mind which every Christian is called upon to renounce.

So that, whether we consider our fortune as a trust from God, or the great good that it enables us to do, or the great harm that it does to ourselves, if idly spent; on all these accounts it is absolutely necessary to make reason and religion the strict rule of using all our fortune.

15. Every exhortation in Scripture to satisfy only such wants as God would have satisfied; every exhortation to be spiritual and heavenly, pressing after a glorious change of our nature; every exhortation to love our neighbour as ourselves, is a command to be strictly religious in the use of our money. This use of our worldly goods, is so much the doctrine of the new Testament, that you cannot read a chapter without being taught something of it. I shall only produce one passage of Scripture, which is sufficient to justify all that I have said.

“ When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then he shall sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked,

and ye clothed me not ; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

16. I have quoted this passage at length, because if one looks at the way of the world, one would hardly think that Christians had ever read this scripture. Some people look upon this text only as a general recommendation of occasional works of charity ; whereas it shows the necessity, not only of occasional charities, but of such an entire charitable life, as is a continual exercise of all such works of charity as we are able to perform.

You own that there is no salvation but in the performance of these good works. Who is it, therefore, that may be said to have performed these good works ? Is it he that has sometimes assisted a prisoner, or relieved the poor or sick ? This would be as absurd as to say, that he had performed the duties of devotion, who had sometimes said his prayers. Is it, therefore, he that has several times done these works of charity ? This can no more be said, than he can be said to be the truly just man, who has done acts of justice several times. What is the rule therefore, or measure, of performing these good works ?

Now the rule is very plain and easy, and such as is common to every other virtue, as well as to charity. Who is the humble, or meek, or just, or faithful man ? Is it he that has several times done acts of humility, meekness, justice, or fidelity ?

ity? No. But it is he that lives in the habitual exercise of these virtues. In like manner, he only can be said to have performed these works of charity, who lives in the habitual exercise of them to the utmost of his power. He only has performed the duty of divine love, who loves God with all his heart, and mind, and strength. And he only has performed the duty of these good works, who has done them with all his heart, and mind, and strength. For there is no other measure of our doing good, than our power of doing it.

17. The Apostle St. Peter puts this question to our blessed Saviour; “Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but until seventy times seven.” Not as if after this number of offences, a man might then cease to forgive; but the expression is to show us, that we are not to bound our forgiveness by any number of offences, but are to continue forgiving the most repeated offences against us. If, therefore, a man ceases to forgive his brother, because he has forgiven him often already; if he excuses himself from forgiving this man, because he has forgiven several others; such a one breaks this law of Christ, concerning the forgiving one’s brother.

Now the rule of forgiving is also the rule of giving. You are not to give, or do good to seven, but to seventy times seven. You are not to cease from giving, because you have given often to the same person, or to other persons; but

must account yourself as much obliged to continue relieving those that continue in want, as you was obliged to relieve them once or twice. Had it not been in your power, you had been excused from relieving any person once ; but if it is in your power to relieve people often, it is as much your duty to do it often, as it is the duty of others to do it but seldom, because they are but seldom able.

18. And the reason of all this is plain ; there is the same necessity of being charitable at one time, as at another. It is as much the best use of our money, to be always doing good with it, as it is the best use of it at any particular time ; so that that which is a reason for a charitable action, is as good a reason for a charitable life ; for charity has nothing to recommend it to-day, but what will be the same recommendation of it to-morrow ; and you cannot neglect it at one time, without being guilty of the same sin, as if you neglected it at another time.

As sure, therefore, as these works of charity are necessary to salvation, so sure is it that we are to do them to the utmost of our power ; not to-day, or to-morrow, but through the whole course of our life. If therefore it be our duty at any time to deny ourselves any needless expenses that we may have to give to those that want, it is as much our duty to do so at all times, that we may be able to do more good : for if it is at any time a sin to prefer needless expenses, to works of charity, it is so at all times. If it is ever necessary to take care of these works of

charity, and to see that we make ourselves in some degree capable of doing them ; it is as necessary to take care to make ourselves as capable as we can be, of performing them in all the parts of our life.

19. Either therefore you must say, that you need never perform any of these good works : or you must own, that you are to perform them all your life in as high a degree as you are able. There is no middle way, any more than there is a middle way between temperance and intemperance. If you do not strive to fulfil all charitable works, if you neglect any of them that are in your power, let it be when it will, or where it will, you number yourself among those that want Christian charity ; because it is as much your duty to do good with all that you have, as it is your duty to be temperate in all that you eat or drink.

20. Hence appears the necessity of renouncing all those foolish and unreasonable expenses, which the folly of mankind has made so common and fashionable in the world. For if it is necessary to do good works as far as you are able, it must be as necessary to renounce those needless ways of spending money, which render you unable to do works of charity.

You must therefore no more conform to these ways of the world, than you must conform to the vices of the world. You must no more spend with those that idly waste their money as their own humour leads them, than you must drink with the drunken ; because a course of

such expenses is no more consistent with a life of charity, than excess in drinking is consistent with a life of sobriety: when therefore any one tells you of the lawfulness of expensive apparel, or the innocence of pleasing yourself with costly satisfactions, only imagine that the same person was to tell you, that you need not do works of charity; that Christ does not require you to do good unto your poor brethren, as unto him; and then you will see the wickedness of such advice: for, to tell you, that you may live in such expenses as make it impossible for you to live in the exercise of good works, is the same thing as telling you, that you need not have any care about such good works themselves.

CHAPTER VI.

How the imprudent use of an estate corrupts all the tempers; and fills the heart with poor and ridiculous passions; represented in the character of Flavia.

1. It has already been observed, that a religious care is to be used in the manner of spending our money or estate; because the manner of spending our estate makes so great a part of our common life, and is so much the business of every day, that, according as we are wise or imprudent in this, the whole course of our lives will be wise or full of folly.

Persons that receive instructions of piety with pleasure, often wonder that they make no further

progress in that religion which they so much admire.

Now the reason is this: religion lives only in their head, but something else has possession of their hearts; and therefore, they continue from year to year mere admirers and praisers of piety, without ever coming up to its precepts.

2. If it be asked, why religion does not get possession of their hearts? It is not because they live in gross sins, or debaucheries; but because their hearts are constantly employed, perverted, and kept in a wrong state, by the indiscreet use of such things as are lawful.

The use and enjoyment of their estates is lawful, and therefore it never comes into their heads to imagine any danger from that quarter. They never reflect, that there is a vain and imprudent use of their estates: which, though it does not destroy like gross sins, yet so disorders the heart, and supports it in such sensuality and dulness, as makes it incapable of receiving the life and spirit of piety.

For our souls may be rendered incapable of all virtue, merely by the use of innocent and lawful things.

3. What is more innocent than rest? And yet what more dangerous than sloth and idleness? What is more lawful than eating and drinking? And yet what more destructive of all virtue, and fruitful of all vice, than sensuality?

Now it is for want of exactness in the use of these innocent and lawful things, that religion cannot get possession of our hearts. And it is

in the right management of ourselves, as to these things, that the art of holy living chiefly consists.

4. Gross sins are plainly seen, and easily avoided by persons that profess religion. But the indiscreet and dangerous use of innocent and lawful things, as it does not shock our consciences, so it is difficult to make people at all sensible of the danger of it.

A gentleman that expends all his estate in sports, and a woman that lays out all her fortune upon herself, can hardly be persuaded that the spirit of religion cannot subsist in such a way of life.

These persons may live free from debaucheries ; they may be friends of religion, so far as to praise and speak well of it : but it cannot govern their hearts, and be the spirit of their actions, till they change their way of life.

For a woman that loves dress, that thinks no expense too great to bestow upon the adorning of her person, cannot stop there ; for that temper draws a thousand other follies along with it, and will render the whole course of her life, her business, her conversation, her hopes, her fears, her taste, her pleasures, and diversions, all suitable to it.

5. Flavia and Miranda are two maiden sisters that have each of them two hundred pounds a year. They buried their parents twenty years ago, and have since that time spent their estate as they pleased.

Flavia has been the wonder of all her friends, for her excellent management, in making so

surprising a figure in so moderate a fortune. Several ladies that have twice her fortune, are not able to be always so genteel, and so constant at places of pleasure and expense. She has every thing that is in the fashion, and is in every place where there is any diversion. Flavia is very orthodox, she talks warmly against heretics and schismatics, is generally at church, and often at the sacrament. She once commended a sermon that was against the vanity of dress, and thought it was very just against Lucinda, whom she takes to be a great deal finer than she need be. If any one asks Flavia to do something in charity, if she likes the person that makes the proposal, or happens to be in a right temper, she will toss him half a crown or a crown, and tell him, if he knew what a long milliner's bill she had just received, he would think it a great deal for her to give. A quarter of a year after this, she hears a sermon upon the necessity of charity; she thinks the man preaches well; that it is a very proper subject; that people want much to be put in mind of it; but she applies nothing to herself, because she remembers that she gave a crown some time ago, when she could so ill spare it.

6. As for poor people themselves, she will admit of no complaints from them; she is very positive they are all cheats and liars, and will say any thing to get relief; and therefore it must be a sin to encourage them in their evil ways.

You would think Flavia had the tenderest conscience in the world, if you were to see how

scrupulous she is of the guilt and danger of giving amiss.

7. She buys all books of wit and humour, and has made an expensive collection of all our English poets. For she says, one cannot have a true taste of any of them, without being conversant with them all.

She will sometimes read a book of piety, if it is a short one, if it is much commended for style and language, and she can tell where to borrow it.

Flavia is very idle, and yet very fond of fine work. This makes her often sit working in bed until noon, and be told many a long story before she is up ; so that I need not tell you her morning devotions are not always rightly performed.

Flavia would be a miracle of piety, if she was but half so careful of her soul, as she is of her body. The rising of a pimple in her face, the sting of a gnat, will make her keep her room two or three days, and she thinks they are very rash people that do not take care of things in time. This makes her so over careful of her health, that she never thinks she is well enough ; and so over indulgent, that she can never be really well. So that it costs her a great deal in sleeping draughts, and waking draughts, in spirits for the head, in drops for the nerves, in cordials for the stomach, and in saffron for her tea.

8. If you visit Flavia on the Sunday, you will always meet good company, you will know what is doing in the world, you will hear the last lampoon, be told who wrote it, and who is meant by every name that is in it. You will hear what

plays were acted that week, which is the finest song in the opera, who was intolerable at the last assembly, and what games are most in fashion. Flavia thinks they are atheists that play at cards on Sunday, but she will tell you the nicety of all the games, what cards she held, how she played them, and the history of all that happened at play, as soon as she comes from church. If you would know who is rude and ill-natured, who is vain and foppish, who lives too high, and who is in debt; if you would know what is the quarrel at a certain house, or who and who are in love; if you would know how late Belinda comes home at night, what clothes she has bought, how she loves compliments, and what a long story she told at such a place; if you would know how cross Lucius is to his wife, what ill-natured things he says to her, when nobody hears him; if you would know how they hate one another in their hearts, though they appear so kind in public; you must visit Flavia on the Sunday. But still she has so great a regard for the holiness of the day, that she has turned a poor old widow out of her house, as a profane wretch, for having been found once mending her clothes on the Sunday night.

Thus lives Flavia; and if she lives ten years longer, she will have spent about fifteen hundred and sixty Sundays after this manner. She will have wore about two hundred different suits of clothes. Out of this thirty years of her life, fifteen of them will have been disposed of in bed,

and of the remaining fifteen about fourteen of them will have been consumed in eating, drinking, dressing, visiting, conversation, reading and hearing plays and romances, at operas, assemblies, balls, and diversions. For you may reckon all the time she is up thus spent, except about an hour and a half, that is disposed of at church, most Sundays in the year. With great management and under mighty rules of economy, she will have spent sixty hundred pounds upon herself, bating only some shillings, crowns, or half crowns, that have gone from her in accidental charities.

9. I shall not take upon me to say, that it is impossible for Flavia to be saved; but thus much must be said, that her whole life is in direct opposition to all those tempers and practices, which the gospel has made necessary to salvation.

If you were to hear her say, that she had lived all her life like Anna the prophetess, "who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers, night and day," you would look upon her as very extravagant; and yet this would be no greater an extravagance, than for her to say that she had been "striving to enter in at the strait gate," or making any one doctrine of the gospel a rule of her life.

She may as well say, that she lived with our Saviour when he was upon earth, as that she has lived in imitation of him, or made it any part of her care to live in such tempers, as he required of all those that would be his disciples.

She may as truly say, that she has every day washed the saints' feet, as that she lived in Christian humility and poverty of spirit; and as reasonably think, that she has taught a charity school, as that she has lived in works of charity. She has as much reason to think, that she has been a sentinel in an army, as that she lived in watching and self denial. And it may as fairly be said, that she lived by the labour of her hands, as that she had "given all diligence to make her calling and election sure."

10. And here it is to be well observed, that the poor, vain turn of mind, the folly and vanity of this whole life of Flavia, is all owing to the manner of using her estate. It is this that has formed her spirit, that has given life to every idle temper, that has supported every trifling passion, and kept her from all thoughts of a prudent, useful, and devout life.

When her parents died, she had no thoughts about her two hundred pounds a year, but that she had so much money to do what she would with, to spend upon herself, and purchase the pleasures and gratifications of all her passions.

And it is this setting out, this false judgment and indiscreet use of her fortune, that has filled her whole life with the same indiscretion, and kept her from thinking of what is right and wise, and pious in every thing else.

If you have seen her delighted in plays and romances, in scandal and backbiting, easily flattered and soon affronted; if you have seen her devoted to pleasures and diversions, a slave to

every passion in its turn, nice in every thing that concerned her body or dress, careless of every thing that might benefit her soul, always wanting some new entertainment, and ready for every happy invention, in show or dress, it was because she had purchased all these tempers with her yearly revenue.

11. She might have been humble, serious, devout, a lover of good books, an admirer of prayer and retirement, careful of her time, diligent in good works, full of charity and the love of God ; but that the imprudent use of her estate forced all the contrary tempers upon her.

And it was no wonder that she should turn her time, her mind, her health, and strength, to the same uses that she turned her fortune. It is owing to her being wrong in so great an article of life, that you can see nothing wise, or pious, in any other part of it.

12. And as Flavia is undone by the unreasonable use of her fortune ; so the lowness of most people's virtue, the imperfections of their piety, and the disorders of their passions, are generally owing to their imprudent use of lawful things.

More people are kept from a true sense of religion, by a regular kind of sensuality, than by gross drunkenness. More men live regardless of the great duties of piety through too great a concern for worldly goods, than through direct injustice.

13. This man would perhaps be devout if he was not a virtuoso. Another is deaf to all the

motives to piety, by indulging an idle, slothful temper.

Could you cure this man of his curiosity and inquisitive temper, or that of his false satisfaction and thirst after learning, you need do no more to make them both become men of great piety.

If this woman would make fewer visits, or that not be always talking, they would neither of them find it hard to be affected with religion.

Would we therefore make a real progress in religion, we must not only abhor gross and notorious sins; but regulate the innocent and lawful parts of our behaviour, and put the common actions of life under the rules of discretion and piety.

CHAPTER VII.

How the wise and pious use of an estate carrieth us to all the virtues of the Christian life; represented in the character of *Miranda*.

1. **MIRANDA** (the sister of *Flavia*) is a sober, reasonable Christian. As soon as she was mistress of her time and fortune, it was her first thought how she might best fulfil every thing that God required of her in the use of them, and make the best use of this short life. She depends upon the truth of what our blessed Lord hath said, “that there is but one thing needful;”

and therefore makes her whole life but one continual labour after it. She has but one reason for doing, or not doing, for liking or not liking any thing; and that is, the will of God. She is not so weak as to pretend to add, what is called the fine lady, to the true Christian; Miranda thinks too well, to be taken with the sound of such silly words. She has renounced the world, to follow Christ in the exercise of humility, charity, devotion, abstinence, and heavenly affections; and that is Miranda's fine breeding.

Whilst she was under her mother, she was forced to live in ceremony, to sit up late at nights, to be in the folly of every fashion, to go loaded with finery to the holy sacrament, to be in every polite conversation, to hear profaneness at the play house, and wanton songs and love intrigues at the opera, to dance at public places, that fops and rakes might admire the fineness of her shape, and the beauty of her motions. The remembrance of this way of life, makes her exceeding careful to maintain a contrary behaviour.

2. Miranda does not divide her duty between God, her neighbour, and herself; but she considers all as due to God, and so does every thing for his sake. This makes her consider her fortune as the gift of God, that is to be used as every thing is that belongs to God, for the wise and reasonable ends of a Christian life. Her fortune, therefore, is divided betwixt herself and several other poor people, and she has only her

part of relief from it. She thinks it the same folly to indulge herself in needless expenses, as to give to other people to spend in the same way ; therefore, as she will not give a poor man money to go see a puppet show, neither will she allow herself any to spend in the same manner, thinking it very proper to be as wise herself as she expects poor men should be. For is it a folly and a crime in a poor man, says Miranda, to waste what is given him in trifles, whilst he wants meat, drink, and clothes ? And is it less folly or a less crime in me, to spend that money in silly diversions, which might be so much better spent in imitation of the divine goodness, in works of kindness to my fellow creatures ? If a poor man's own necessities are a reason why he should not waste any of his money idly, surely the necessities of the poor, and the excellency of charity, is a much greater reason why no one should waste any of his money. For if he does so, he does not only like the poor man, waste that which he wants himself ; but he wastes that which is wanted for the most noble uses, and which Christ himself is ready to receive at his hands. And if we are angry at a poor man, when he throws away that which should buy his own bread, how must we appear in the sight of God, if we make a wanton idle use of that which would buy bread and clothes for our hungry and naked brethren, who are as near and dear to God as we are, and fellow heirs of the same glory ? This is the spirit of Miranda ; she is only one of a certain number of poor people

that are relieved out of her fortune ; and she only differs from them in the blessedness of giving.

3. If you was to see her, you would wonder what poor body it was, that was so surprisingly neat and clean. She has but one rule in her dress, to be always clean, and in the cheapest things. Every thing about her resembles the purity of her soul ; and she is always clean without, because she is always pure within.

Every morning sees her early at her prayers. She rejoices in the beginning of every day, because it begins all her rules of holy living, and brings the fresh pleasure of repeating them. She is as a guardian angel to those that dwell about her, with her watchings and prayers, blessing the place where she dwells, and making intercession with God for those that are asleep.

Her devotions have had some intervals, before the light is suffered to enter into her sister's room. Miranda does not know what it is to have a dull half day ; the returns of her hours of prayer, and her religious exercises, come too often to let any considerable part of time lie heavy upon her hands.

4. When you see her at work, you see the same wisdom that governs all her other actions. She is either doing something that is necessary for herself, or necessary for others who want to be assisted. There is scarce a poor family in the neighbourhood, but wears something or other that has had the labour of her hands. Her pious mind neither wants the amusement, nor can bear

with the folly of idle and impertinent work. When there is no useful or charitable work to be done, Miranda will work no more.

At her table she lives strictly by this rule of holy Scripture, “whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” This makes her begin and end every meal, as she begins and ends every day, with acts of devotion. She eats and drinks only for the sake of living, and with so regular an abstinence, that every meal is an exercise of self denial. If Miranda was to run a race for her life, she would submit to a diet that was proper for it; but as the race which is set before her, is a race of holiness and heavenly affection, which she is to finish in a disordered body of earthly passions; so her every day diet has this one end, to make her body fitter for this spiritual race. She does not weigh her meat in a pair of scales; but she weighs it in a much better balance: so much as gives a proper strength to her body, and renders it able and willing to obey the soul, to join in psalms and prayers, and lift up eyes and hands toward heaven with greater readiness, so much is Miranda’s meal. So that Miranda will never have her eyes swell with fatness, till she has changed her religion.

5. The holy Scriptures, especially of the New Testament, are her daily study; these she reads with a watchful attention, constantly casting an eye upon herself, and trying herself, by every doctrine that is there. When she has the New Testament in her hand, she supposes herself at

the feet of our Saviour and his apostles ; and makes every thing that she learns of them so many laws of her life. She receives their words with as much attention and reverence, as if she saw their persons, and knew that they were just come from heaven on purpose to teach her the way that leads to it.

She thinks that the trying herself every day by the Scripture, is the only way to be ready for the trial at the last day.

Of all human writings, the lives of pious persons and eminent saints, are her greatest delight. In these she searches as for hidden treasure, hoping to find some secret of holy living, some uncommon degree of piety, which she may make her own. By this means Miranda has her head and heart stored with all the principles of wisdom and holiness. She is so full of the one business of life, that she finds it difficult to converse upon any other subject ; and if you are in her company, you must be made wiser and better, whether you will or no.

6. To relate her charity would be to relate the history of every day for twenty years ; for so long has all her fortune been spent that way. She has set up near twenty poor tradesmen that had failed in their business, and saved as many from failing. She has educated several poor children, that were picked up in the streets, and put them in an honest employment. As soon as any labourer is confined at home with any sickness, she sends him, till he recovers, twice the value of his wages, that he may have one

part to give to his family, as usual, and the other to provide things convenient for his sickness.

If a family seems too large to be supported by the labour of those that can work in it, she pays their rent, and gives them something yearly toward their clothing. By this means there are many poor families that live in a comfortable manner, and are from year to year blessing her in their prayers. If there is any poor man or woman that is more than ordinarily wicked, Miranda has her eye upon them: she watches their time of adversity; and if she can discover they are in straits or affliction, she gives them speedy relief. She has this care for this sort of people, because she once saved a profligate person from being carried to prison, who immediately became a true penitent.

7. There is nothing in the character of Miranda more to be admired than this temper. For this tenderness toward the most abandoned sinners, is the highest instance of a godlike soul.

Miranda once passed by a house, where the man and wife were cursing and swearing at one another in the most dreadful manner, and three children crying about them. This sight so much affected her compassionate mind, that she went the next day and bought the three children, that they might not be ruined by living with such wicked parents. They now live with Miranda, are blessed with her care and prayers, and all the good works which she can do for them. They hear her talk, they see her live, they join with her in psalms and prayers.—The eldest of

them has already converted his parents from their wicked life, and shows a turn of mind so remarkably pious, that Miranda intends him for holy orders : that being thus saved himself, he may do to other miserable objects, as she has done to him.

Miranda is a constant relief to poor people in their misfortunes and accidents. There are some times little misfortunes that happen them, which of themselves they could never be able to overcome. The death of a cow, or a horse, or some little robbery, would keep them in distress all their lives. She does not suffer them to grieve under such accidents. She immediately gives them the full value of their loss, and makes use of it as a means of raising their minds to God.

She has a great tenderness for old people that are past their labour. The parish allowance to such is seldom a comfortable maintenance. For this reason they are the constant objects of her care. She adds so much to their allowance, as somewhat exceeds the wages they got when they were young. This she does to comfort the infirmities of their age, that, being free from trouble, they may serve God in peace. She has generally a large number of this kind, who, by her charities and exhortations, spend their last days in great piety.

9. Miranda never wants compassion, even to common beggars ; especially those that are old or sick, or that want eyes, or limbs. She hears their complaints with tenderness, gives them some proof of her kindness, and never rejects

them with hard or reproachful language, for fear of adding affliction to her fellow creatures.

If a poor traveller tells her, that he has neither strength, nor food, nor money left, she never bids him go to the place from whence he came, or tells him that she cannot relieve him, because he may be a cheat, and she does not know him ; but she believes him for that reason, because he is a stranger, and unknown to her. For it is the most noble part of charity, to be kind to those whom we never saw before, and perhaps never may see again in this life. *I was a stranger, and ye took me in,* saith our blessed Saviour ; but who can perform this duty, that will not relieve persons that are unknown to him ?

Miranda considers that Lazarus was a common beggar ; that he was the care of angels, and carried into Abraham's bosom. She considers that our blessed Saviour and his apostles were kind to beggars ; that they spoke comfortably to them, healed their diseases, and restored eyes and limbs to the blind and lame ; that Peter said to the beggar that wanted an alms from him, " Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee ; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.". Miranda therefore never treats beggars with disregard and aversion, but imitates the kindness of our Saviour and his apostles toward them : and though she cannot, like them, work miracles for their relief, yet she relieves them with that power that she hath ; and may say with

the apostle, "Such as I have, give I thee, in the name of Jesus Christ."

It may be, says Miranda, that I may often give to those that do not deserve it, or that will make an ill use of my alms. But what then? Is not this the very method of divine goodness? Does not God make "his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good?" Is not this the very goodness that is recommended to us in Scripture, that by imitating of it, we may be children of our Father which is in heaven, "who sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust?" And shall I withhold a little money or food from my fellow creature, for fear he should not be good enough to receive it of me? Do I beg of God to deal with me, not according to my merit, but according to his own goodness; and shall I be so absurd, as to withhold my charity from a poor brother, because he may perhaps not deserve it? Shall I use a measure toward him, which I pray God never to use toward me?

Besides, where has the Scripture made merit the rule or measure of charity? On the contrary, the Scripture saith, "If thy enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."

Now this plainly teaches us that the merit of persons is to be no rule of our charity, but that we are to do acts of kindness to those that least of all deserve it. For if I am to love and to do good to my worst enemies, notwithstanding all their spite and malice, surely merit is no measure of charity. If I am not to withhold my charity from such bad people, surely I am not

to deny alms to poor beggars, whom I do not know to be bad people.

11. You will perhaps say, that by this means I encourage people to be beggars. But the same thoughtless objection may be made against all kinds of charities, for they may encourage people to depend upon them. The same may be said against forgiving our enemies, for it may encourage people to do us hurt. The same may be said even against the goodness of God, that by pouring his blessings on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust, evil and unjust men are encouraged in their wicked ways. The same may be said against clothing the naked, or giving medicines to the sick, for that may encourage people to neglect themselves, and be careless of their health. But when the "love of God dwelleth in you," and has filled you with bowels of mercy, you will make no more such objections as these.

When you are at any time turning away the poor, the old, the sick and helpless traveller, the lame, or the blind, ask yourself this question, Do I sincerely wish these poor creatures may be as happy as Lazarus, that was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom? Do I sincerely desire that God would make them fellow heirs with me in eternal glory? Now if you search into your soul, you will find that there is none of these motions there, that you are wishing nothing of this. For it is impossible for any one heartily to wish a poor creature so great a happiness, and yet not have a heart to give him a small

alms. For this reason, says Miranda, as far as I can, I give to all, because I pray to God to forgive all ; and I cannot refuse an alms to those whom I pray God to bless, whom I wish to be partakers of eternal glory ; but am glad to show some degree of love to such, as I hope, will be the objects of the infinite love of God. And if, as our Saviour has assured us, “ it be more blessed to give than to receive,” we ought to look upon those that ask our alms, as so many friends and benefactors, that come to do us a greater good than they can receive ; that come to be witnesses of our charity, to be monuments of our love, to appear for us at the day of judgment, and to help us to a blessedness greater than our alms can bestow on them.

12. This is the spirit, and this is the life of Miranda ; and if she lives ten years longer, she will have spent sixty hundred pounds in charity ; for that which she allows herself, may fairly be reckoned amongst her alms.

When she dies, she must shine amongst apostles, and saints, and martyrs : she must stand amongst the first servants of God, and be glorious amongst those that have fought the good fight, and finished their course with joy.

13. Now this life of Miranda, however contrary to the fashion of the world, is yet suitable to the true spirit of Christianity.

To live as she does, is as truly suitable to the gospel of Christ, as to be baptized, or receive the sacrament.

Her spirit is that which animated the saints

of former ages ; and it is because they lived as she does, that we now celebrate their memories, and praise God for their examples.

There is nothing whimsical, trifling, or unreasonable, in her character : but every thing there described, is a proper instance of solid piety.

14. It is as easy to show, that it is whimsical to go to church, as that it is whimsical to observe any of these rules. For all Miranda's rules of living to God, of spending her time and fortune, of eating, working, dressing and conversing, are as substantial parts of a holy life, as devotion and prayer.

For there is nothing to be said for the wisdom of devotion, but what is as good an argument for the wise and reasonable use of apparel.

15. If you fancy that it is your only folly, and that therefore there can be no great matter in it, you are like those that think they are only guilty of the folly of covetousness or ambition. Now though some people may live so plausible a life, as to appear chargeable with no other fault than covetousness or ambition ; yet the case is not as it appears, for covetousness or ambition cannot subsist in a heart that is in other respects rightly devoted to God.

In like manner, though people may spend most that they have in needless ornaments, and yet seem in other respects truly pious, yet it is certainly false ; for it is impossible for a mind that is in a true state of religion, to be vain in the use of clothes. Now to convince you of this, let us suppose that some eminent saint, for

instance, the Virgin Mary, was sent into the world for a few years, and that you was going to her to be edified by her piety, would you expect to find her dressed out and adorned in fine and expensive clothes ? No. You would know in your own mind, that it was as impossible as to find her learning to dance. Do but add saint, or holy, to any person, either man or woman, and your own mind tells you immediately, that such a character cannot admit of the vanity of fine apparel. A saint finely dressed, is as great nonsense, as an apostle in an embroidered suit. Every one's own natural sense convinces him of the inconsistency of these things.

16. Now what is the reason, that when you think of a saint you cannot admit the vanity of apparel ? Is it not because it is inconsistent with such a right state of heart ? And is not this a demonstration, that where such vanity is admitted, there a right state of heart is wanted ? For as certainly as the Virgin Mary could not indulge herself, or conform to the vanity of the world in dress, and figure : so certain is it, that none can indulge themselves in this vanity, but those who want her piety of heart ; and consequently it must be owned, that all needless and expensive finery is the effect of a disordered heart.

Covetousness is not a crime because there is any harm in gold or silver ; but because it is a foolish and unreasonable state of mind, that is fallen from its true good, and sunk into such a poor and wretched satisfaction.

In like manner, the expensive finery of dress

is not a crime because there is any thing good or evil in clothes, but because the expensive ornaments of clothing shows a foolish and unreasonable state of heart, that is fallen from right notions of human nature, and turns the necessities of life into so many instances of pride and folly.

17. This, therefore, is the way that you are to judge of the crime of vain apparel : it is an offence against the proper use of clothes, as covetousness is an offence against the proper use of money : it is an indulgence of proud and unreasonable tempers, an offence against the humility and sobriety of the Christian spirit : it is an offence against all those doctrines that require you to do all to the glory of God, and an offence against all those texts of Scripture that command you to love your neighbour as yourself, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and do all works of charity that you are able. So that you must not deceive yourself with saying, where can be the harm of clothes ? For the covetous man might as well say, where can be the harm of gold or silver ? But you must consider, that it is a great deal of harm to want that wise and reasonable state of heart which is according to the spirit of religion, and which no one can have in the manner that he ought to have it, who indulges himself either in the vanity of dress or the desire of riches.

18. Some persons, perhaps, who admire the life of Miranda, may say, How can it be proposed as a common example ? How can we

that are married, or we who are under the direction of our parents, imitate such a life?

It is answered, just as you may imitate the life of our blessed Saviour, and his apostles. The circumstances of our Saviour's life, and the state and condition of his apostles, were more different from yours, than that of Miranda is; and yet their life is the common example that is proposed to all Christians.

It is their spirit, therefore, their piety, their love of God, that you are to imitate, and not the particular form of their life.

Act under God as they did, direct your common actions to that end which they did, practise such love of God, such charity to your neighbour, such humility and self-denial as they did; and then, though you are only teaching your own children, and St. Paul is converting nations, yet you are following his steps, and acting after his example.

19. Do not think, therefore, that you cannot or need not be like Miranda, because you are not in her state of life; for as the same spirit and temper would have made Miranda a saint, though she had been forced to labour for a maintenance; so if you will aspire after her spirit, every condition of life will furnish you with sufficient means of employing it.

Miranda is what she is, because she does every thing in the name, and with regard to her duty to God; and when you do the same, you will be exactly like her, though you are never so different in your outward state.

You are married, you say, therefore you have not your time and fortune in your power as she has.

It is true; therefore you cannot spend so much time, nor so much money, in the manner she does.

But Miranda's perfection does not consist in this, that she spends so much time, or so much money in such a manner, but that she is careful to make the best use of all the time and money which she has. Do you this, and then you are like Miranda.

If she has two hundred pounds a year, and you have only two mites, have you not the more reason to be exceeding exact in the wisest use of them? If she has a great deal of time, and you have but a little, ought you not to be the more watchful and circumspect, lest that little should be lost?

CHAPTER VIII.

Showing that all orders of men and women, of all ages, are obliged to devote themselves to God.

1. I HAVE in the foregoing chapters shown that all the parts of our common life, our employments, our talents and fortune, are to be made holy and acceptable unto God, by a wise and religious use of every thing, and by directing our actions and designs to the glory of God.

I shall now show that this holiness of common life, this religious use of every thing we have, is a devotion that is the duty of all orders of Christian people.

Fulvius has had a learned education, and taken his degrees in the university; he came from thence, that he might be free from any rules of life. He takes no employment upon him, nor enters into any business, because he thinks that every employment or business calls people to the just discharge of its several duties. He did not enter into holy orders, because he looks upon it to be a state that requires great holiness of life, and it does not suit his temper to be so good. He will tell you that he never intends to marry, because he cannot oblige himself to that regularity of life, which he takes to be the duty of those that are at the head of a family. He refused to be godfather to his nephew, because he will have no trust of any kind to answer for.

Fulvius thinks that he is conscientious in this conduct, and is therefore content with the most idle, impertinent, and careless life.

He has no religion, no devotion, no pretences to piety. He lives by no rules, and thinks all is very well, because he is neither a priest, nor a father, nor a guardian, nor has any employment or family to look after.

2. But Fulvius, you are a rational creature, and as such are as much obliged to live according to reason, as a priest is obliged to attend at the altar, or a guardian to be faithful to his

trust : if you live contrary to reason, you do not commit a small crime, you do not break a small trust ; but you break the law of nature, you rebel against God who gave you that nature, and put yourself amongst those whom the God of reason will punish as apostates and deserters.

Though you have no employment, yet as you are baptized into the profession of Christ's religion, you are as much obliged to live according to the holiness of the Christian spirit, as any man is obliged to be honest and faithful in his calling. If you abuse this great calling, you are not false in a small matter, but you abuse the precious blood of Christ ; you crucify the Son of God afresh : you neglect the highest instances of divine goodness ; and it will be more tolerable for "Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment, than for you."

3. It is therefore great folly for any one to think himself at liberty to live as he pleases, because he is not in such a state of life as some others are : for if there is any thing dreadful in the abuse of any trust ; if there is any thing to be feared for the neglect of any calling ; there is nothing more to be feared than the wrong use of our reason, nor any thing more to be dreaded, than the neglect of our Christian calling ; which is not to serve the little uses of a short life, but to redeem souls unto God, to fill heaven with saints, and furnish a kingdom of eternal glory.

• No man, therefore, must think himself excused from the exactness of piety, because he has chosen to be idle and independent in the world ;

for the necessities of a holy life are not founded in the several conditions of this life, but in the immutable nature of God and the nature of man. A man is not to be reasonable and holy because he is a priest, or a father of a family ; but he is to be a pious priest, and a good father, because piety and goodness are the laws of human nature. Could any man please God, without living according to reason and order, there would be nothing displeasing to God in an idle priest, or a reprobate father. He therefore that abuses his reason, is like him that abuses the priesthood ; and he that neglects the holiness of the Christian life, is as the man that disregards the most important trust.

4. If a man was to choose to put out his eyes, rather than enjoy the light, and see the works of God ; if he should voluntarily kill himself, by refusing to eat and drink, every one would own that such a one was a rebel against God, that justly deserved his highest indignation. You would not say, that this was only sinful in a priest, or a master of a family, but in every man as such.

Now wherein does the sinfulness of this behaviour consist ? Does it not consist in this, that he abuses his nature, and refuses to act that part for which God had created him ? But if this be true, then all persons that abuse their reason, that act a different part from that for which God created them, are like this man, rebels against God, and on the same account subject to his wrath.

5. Let us suppose that this man, instead of putting out his eyes, had only employed them in looking at ridiculous things, or shut them up in sleep ; that instead of starving himself to death by not eating at all, he should turn every meal into a feast, and eat and drink like an epicure ; could he be said to have lived more to the glory of God ? Could he any more be said to act the part for which God had created him, than if he had put out his eyes, and starved himself to death ?

Now do but suppose a man extinguishing his reason, instead of putting out his eyes, and living in a course of folly and impertinence, instead of starving himself to death, and then you have found out as great a rebel against God.

6. If we consider mankind as a redeemed order of fallen spirits, that are baptized into a fellowship with the Son of God ; to be temples of the Holy Ghost : to live according to his holy inspirations ; to offer to God the reasonable sacrifice of an humble, pious, and thankful life ; to purify themselves from the disorders of their fall ; to make a right use of the means of grace, in order to be sons of eternal glory : if we look at mankind in this true light, then we shall find, that all tempers that are contrary to this holy society ; all actions that make us unlike to Christ, have every thing in them that can make us odious to God. So that though pride and sensuality do not hurt civil society, as cheating and dishonesty do ; yet they hurt that society, and oppose those ends, which are greater and

more glorious in the eyes of God, than all the societies that relate to this world.

7. Nothing therefore can be more foolish, than to imagine, that because we are private persons who have taken upon us no charge or employment, therefore we may live more at large, indulge our appetites, and be less careful of holiness ; for it is as good an excuse for cheating and dishonesty.—Because he that abuses his reason, that indulges himself in lust and sensuality, and neglects to act the wise and reasonable part of a Christian, has every thing in his life to render him hateful to God, that is to be found in cheating and dishonesty.

If therefore you rather choose to be an idle epicure, than to be unfaithful ; if you rather choose to live in lust and sensuality, than to injure your neighbour in his goods, you have made no better a provision for the favour of God, than he that rather chooses to rob a house than to rob a church.

For the abusing of our own nature, is as great a disobedience against God, as the injuring our neighbour ; and he that wants piety toward God, has done as much to damn himself, as he that wants honesty toward men.

8. Another argument to prove that all orders of men are obliged to be thus holy in the common course of their lives, in the use of every thing that they enjoy, may be taken from our obligation to prayer.

It is granted that prayer is a duty that belongs to all states and conditions of men. Now, if we

inquire, why no state of life is to be excused from prayer, we shall find it as good a reason, why every state of life is to be made a state of holiness in all its parts.

For the reason why we are to pray to God, and praise him with hymns and psalms of thanksgiving, is because we are to live wholly to God, and glorify him in all possible ways. It is not because the praises of words, or forms of thanksgiving, are more particularly parts of piety, or more the worship of God, than other things; but it is because they are possible ways of expressing our dependance, our obedience, and devotion to God. Now, if this be the reason of verbal praises and thanksgivings, because we are to live unto God in all possible ways; then we are equally obliged to glorify God in all other actions that can be turned into acts of piety and obedience. And as actions are of much more signification than words, it must be a much more acceptable worship of God, to glorify him in all the actions of our common life, than with any little form of words at any particular times.

Thus, if God is to be worshipped with forms of thanksgiving, he that is content and thankful in every accident of his life, because it comes from God, praises God in a much higher manner, than he that has some set time for singing of psalms. He that dares not say an ill-natured word, or do an unreasonable thing, because he considers God as every where present, performs a better devotion, than he that dares not miss the church. To live in the world as a stranger

and a pilgrim, using all its enjoyments as if we used them not, making all our actions so many steps toward a better life, is offering a better sacrifice to God, than any forms of holy and heavenly prayers.

9. To be humble in all our actions, to avoid every appearance of pride and vanity, to be meek and lowly in our words, actions, dress, behaviour, and designs, in imitation of our blessed Saviour, is worshipping God in a higher manner than those do who have only times to fall low on their knees.—He that contents himself with necessaries, that he may give the remainder to those that want it; that dares not to spend any money foolishly, because he considers it as a talent from God, which must be used according to his will, praises God, with something that is more glorious than songs of praise.

Prayers therefore are so far from being a sufficient devotion, that they are the smallest parts of it. We are to praise God with words and prayers, because it is a possible way of glorifying God. But then, as words are but small things in themselves, as times of prayer are but little, if compared with the rest of our lives; so that devotion which only consists in times and forms of prayer, is but a very small thing, if compared to that devotion which is to appear in every other part and circumstance of our lives.

10. Again, as it is an easy thing to worship God with forms of words, and to observe times of offering them unto him, so it is the smallest kind of piety.

And, on the other hand, as it is more difficult to worship God with our substance, to honour him with the right use of our time, to offer to him the continual sacrifice of self denial and mortification ; as it requires more piety to eat and drink only for such ends as may glorify God, to undertake no labour, nor allow of any diversion, but where we can act in the name of God ; as it is most difficult to sacrifice all our corrupt tempers, and make piety to God the rule and measure of all the actions of our common life ; so the devotion of this kind is a much more acceptable service to God, than those words of devotion which we offer to him either in the church, or in our closet.

Every sober reader will easily perceive, that I do not intend to lessen the true and great value of prayers, either public or private ; but only to show him, that they are certainly but a very slender part of devotion, when compared to a devout life.

11. To see this in a yet clearer light, let us suppose a person to have appointed times for praising God with psalms and hymns, and to be strict in the observation of them ; let it be supposed also, that in his common life he is restless and uneasy, full of murmurings and complaints at every thing, never pleased but by chance, but murmuring and repining at the very seasons, and having some thing to dislike in every thing that happens to him. Now, can you conceive any thing more absurd and unreasonable, than such a character as this ? Is such a one to be

reckoned thankful to God, because he has forms of praise which he offers to him ? Nay, is it not certain that such forms of praise must be so far from being an acceptable devotion to God, that they must be an abomination ? Now the absurdity which you see in this instance, is the same in any other part of our life. If our common life hath any contrariety to our prayers, it is the same abomination, as songs of thanksgiving in the mouths of murmurers.

Bended knees, whilst you are clothed with pride ; heavenly petitions, whilst you are hoarding up treasures upon earth ; holy devotions, whilst you live in the follies of the world ; prayers of meekness and charity, whilst your heart is the seat of spite and resentment ; hours of prayer whilst you give up days and years to idle diversions, impertinent visits, and foolish pleasures ; are as unacceptable service to God, as forms of thanksgiving from a person that lives in repinings and discontent.

So that unless the common course of our lives be according to the common spirit of our prayers, our prayers are so far from being a sufficient degree of devotion, that they become an empty lip labour : or, what is worse, a notorious hypocrisy.

12. Seeing therefore we are to make the spirit and temper of our prayers, the common spirit and temper of our lives, this may convince us, that all orders of people are to labour after the same utmost perfection of the Christian life. For as all Christians are to use the same holy and heavenly devotions, as they are all with the

same earnestness to pray for the Spirit of God ; so is it a sufficient proof, that all orders of people are, to the utmost of their power, to make their life agreeable to that one Spirit, for which they all pray.

A soldier, or a tradesman, is not called to minister at the altar, or preach the gospel ; but every soldier or tradesman is as much obliged to be devout, humble, holy, and heavenly minded in all the parts of his common life, as a clergyman is obliged to be zealous, faithful and laborious in all parts of his profession.

13. All men, therefore, as men, have one and the same important business, to act up to the excellency of their rational nature, and to make reason and order the law of all their designs and actions. All Christians, as Christians, have one and the same calling, to live according to the excellency of the Christian spirit, and to make the sublime precepts of the gospel, the rule and measure of all their tempers in common life. The one thing needful to one, is the one thing needful to all.

The merchant is no longer to hoard up treasures upon earth ; the soldier is no longer to fight for glory ; the great scholar is no longer to pride himself in the depths of science ; but they must all, with one spirit, "count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus."

The fine lady must teach her eyes to weep, and be clothed with humility. The polite gentleman must exchange the gay thoughts of wit

and fancy, for a broken and a contrite heart. The man of quality must so far renounce the dignity of his birth, as to think himself miserable till he is born again. Servants must consider their service as done unto God. Masters must consider their servants as their brethren in Christ, that are to be treated as their fellow members of the mystical body of Christ.

14. Young ladies must either devote themselves to piety, prayer, self denial, and all good works in a virgin state of life; or else marry to be holy, sober, and prudent in the care of a family, bringing up their children in piety, humility, and devotion, and abounding in all other good works, to the utmost of their capacity. They have no choice of any thing else; but must devote themselves to God in one of these states. They may choose a married or a single life; but it is not left to their choice, whether they will make either state, a state of holiness, humility, and all other duties of the Christian life. It is no more left in their power, because they have fortunes, or are born of rich parents, to divide themselves betwixt God and the world, or take such pleasures as their fortunes will afford them, than to be sometimes chaste and modest, and sometimes not.

They are not to consider how much religion may secure them a fair character, or how they may add devotion to an impertinent, vain and giddy life; but must look into the spirit and temper of their prayers, into the nature and end of Christianity; and then they will find, that

whether married or unmarried, they have but one business upon their hands ; to be wise, and pious, and holy ; not in little modes and forms of worship, but in the whole turn of their minds, in the whole form of their behaviour, and in the daily course of their common life.

15. Young gentlemen must consider what our blessed Saviour said to the young gentleman in the gospel ; he bade “ him sell all he had and give to the poor.” Now though this text does not oblige all people to sell all ; yet it certainly obliges all kinds of people to employ all their estates in such wise and reasonable ways, as may show all they have is devoted to God : and that no part of it is kept from the poor, to be spent in needless, vain, and foolish expenses.

If therefore young gentlemen propose to themselves a life of pleasure and indulgence : if they spend their estates in high living, in luxury and intemperance, in state and equipage, in pleasures and diversions, in sports and gaming, and such like wanton gratifications of their foolish passions, they have as much reason to look upon themselves to be angels, as to be disciples of Christ.

Let them be assured, that it is the one only business of a Christian gentleman, to distinguish himself by good works, to be eminent in the most sublime virtues of the gospel, to bear with the ignorance and weakness of the vulgar, to be a friend and patron to all that dwell about him, to live in the utmost heights of wisdom and holiness, and show through the whole course of his

life a true religious greatness of mind. They must aspire after such a gentility, as they might have learned from seeing the blessed Jesus, and show no other spirit of a gentleman, but such as they might have got by living with the holy apostles. They must learn to love God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength, and their neighbour as themselves ; and then they have all the greatness and distinction that they can have here, and are fit for eternal happiness in heaven.

16. Thus, in all orders and conditions, either of men or women, this is the one holiness, which is to be the common life of all Christians.

The merchant is not to leave devotion to the clergyman, nor the clergyman to leave humility to the labourer. Women of fortune are not to leave it to the poor of their sex, “ to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, to adorn themselves in modest apparel, shame facedness and sobriety ;” nor poor women leave it to the rich to attend at the worship of God. Great men must be eminent for true poverty of spirit, and people of a low and afflicted state must greatly rejoice in God.

The man of strength and power is to forgive and pray for his enemies, and the innocent sufferer that is chained in prison, must, with Paul and Silas, at midnight sing praises unto God. For God is to be glorified, holiness is to be practised, and the spirit of religion is to be the common spirit of every Christian in every state and condition of life.

For the Son of God did not come from above,

to add an external form of worship to the several ways of life that are in the world, and so to leave people to live as they did before, in such tempers and enjoyments as the fashion and spirit of the world approves : but as he came down from heaven, altogether divine and heavenly in his own nature ; so it was to call mankind to a divine and heavenly life ; to the highest change of their whole nature and temper : to be born again of the Holy Spirit ; to walk in the wisdom, and light, and love of God, and to be like him to the utmost of their power ; to a mortification of their passions : and to live in such wisdom and holiness, as might fit them to enjoy God to all eternity.

17. Whatever therefore is foolish, vain, or earthly, or sensual in the life of a Christian, is something that ought not to be there. But if any thing of this kind runs through the course of our whole life, if we allow ourselves in things that are either vain, foolish, or sensual, we renounce our profession.

For as sure as Jesus Christ was wisdom and holiness ; as sure as he came to make us like himself, so sure is it, that none keep to their Christian profession, but they, who, to the utmost of their power, live a wise, and holy, and heavenly life. This, and this alone, is Christianity ; universal holiness in every part of life, a heavenly wisdom in all our actions, not conforming to the spirit and temper of the world, but turning all worldly enjoyments into means of piety and devotion.

18. And if it be the happiness and glory of a bishop to live in this spirit, full of these holy tempers, doing every thing as unto God, it is as much the glory and happiness of all men and women, whether young or old, to live in the same spirit. And whoever can find any reasons, why an ancient bishop should be intent upon divine things, turning all his life into the highest exercises of piety and devotion, will find them so many reasons why he should, to the utmost of his power, do the same himself.

If you say that a bishop must be an eminent example of Christian holiness, because of his high and sacred calling, you say right. But if you say, that it is more to his advantage to be exemplary, than it is yours, you greatly mistake. For there is nothing to make the highest degrees of holiness desirable to a bishop, but what makes them equally desirable to every young person of every family.

For an exalted piety, and the religious use of every thing, is as much the glory and happiness of one state of life as it is of another.

Do but fancy what a spirit of piety you would have in the best bishop in the world, how you would have him love God, how you would have him imitate the life of our Saviour and his apostles, how you would have him live above the world, shining in all the instances of a heavenly life, and then you have found out that spirit which you ought to make the spirit of your own life.

I desire every reader to dwell awhile upon this reflection, and perhaps he will find more

conviction from it than he imagines. Every one can tell how good and pious he would have some people to be ; every one knows how wise and reasonable a thing it is in a bishop, to be entirely above the world, and be an eminent example of Christian perfection. As soon as you think of a wise and ancient bishop, you fancy some exalted degree of piety, a living example of all those holy tempers which you find described in the gospel.

19. Now if you ask yourself, what is the happiest thing for a young clergyman to do ? You must be forced to answer, that nothing can be so happy and glorious for him, as to be like that excellent, holy bishop.

If you go on, and ask what is the happiest thing for a young gentleman or his sisters to do ? The answer must be the same ; that nothing can be so happy or glorious for them, as to live in such habits of piety, in such exercises of a divine life, as this good old bishop does. For every thing that is great and glorious in religion, is as much the true glory of every man or woman, as it is the glory of any bishop. If high degrees of divine love, if fervent charity, if spotless purity, if heavenly affections, if constant mortification, if frequent devotion, be the best and happiest way of life for any Christian, it is so for every Christian.

And as the wisest bishop in the world is he who lives in the greatest heights of holiness, who is most exemplary in all the exercises of a divine life ; so the wisest youth, the wisest woman,

whether married or unmarried, is she that lives in the highest degrees of Christian holiness, and all the exercises of a divine and heavenly life.

CHAPTER IX.

Showing how great devotion fills our lives with the greatest peace and happiness that can be enjoyed in this world.

1. SOME people will perhaps object that this living unto God in all that we do, is too great a restraint upon human life ; and that, by depriving ourselves of so many innocent pleasures, we shall render our lives dull, uneasy and melancholy.

It will produce just the contrary effect. Instead of making our lives dull and melancholy, it will render them full of content and strong satisfactions ; as by these rules we only change the childish satisfactions of our vain and sickly passions, for the solid enjoyments and real happiness of a sound mind.

For as there is no true foundation for comfort in life, but in the assurance that a wise and good God governeth the world ; so the more we find out God in every thing, the more we apply to him in every place, the more we look up to him in all our actions, the more we conform to his will, the more we act according to his wisdom, and imitate his goodness, by so much the more do we enjoy God, and increase all that is happy and comfortable in human life.

And it is plain, he that is endeavouring to subdue all those passions of pride, envy and ambition, which religion opposes, is doing more to make himself happy, even in this life, than he that is contriving means to indulge them.

For these passions are the causes of all the disquiets of human life ; they are the dropsies and fevers of our minds, vexing them with false appetites, and restless cravings after such things as we do not want, and spoiling our taste for those things which are our proper good.

2. Do but imagine that you somewhere or other saw a man, that proposed reason as the rule of all his actions ; that had no desires but after such things as nature wants, and religion approves ; that was as pure from all the motions of pride, envy, and covetousness, as from thoughts of murder ; that in this freedom from worldly passions, he had a soul full of divine love, wishing and praying that all men may have what they want of worldly things, and be partakers of eternal glory.

Do but fancy a man living in this manner, and your own conscience will immediately tell you, that he is the happiest man in the world, and that it is not in the power of the richest fancy to invent any higher happiness in the present life.

And on the other hand, if you suppose him to be in any degree less perfect ; if you suppose him but subject to one foolish fondness, or vain passion, your own conscience will tell you, that he so far lessens his own happiness, and robs himself of the true enjoyment of his other virtues. So

true is it, that the more we live by the rules of religion, the more peaceful and happy we are.

3. Again, as it thus appears that real happiness is only to be had from religion; so the same truth will appear from a consideration of human misery. If we look into the world, and view the troubles of human life, we shall find that they are all owing to our irreligious passions.

Now all trouble and uneasiness is founded in the want of something or other; would we therefore know the true cause of our troubles and disquiets, we must find out the cause of our wants; because that which creates and increases our wants does in the same degree create and increase our troubles and disquiets.

God Almighty has sent us into the world with very few wants; meat, and drink, and clothing, are the only things necessary in life; and as these are only our present needs, so the present world is well furnished to supply these needs.

If a man had half the world in his power, he can make no more of it than this; as he wants it only to support an animal life, so is it unable to do any thing else for him, or to afford him any other happiness.

4. This is the state of man, born with few wants, and into a large world, very capable of supplying them. So that one would reasonably suppose, men should pass their lives in content and thankfulness to God, at least, that they should be free from violent disquiets and vexations, as being placed in a world that has more than enough to relieve all their wants.

But if to all this we add, that this short life, thus furnished with all that we want in it, is only a short passage to eternal glory, where we shall be clothed with the brightness of angels, and enter into the joys of God, we might still more reasonably expect that human life should be a state of peace, and joy, and delight in God. Thus it would certainly be, if reason had its full power over us.

But alas! though God, and nature, and reason, make human life thus free from wants, yet our passions, in rebellion against God, against nature and reason, create a new world of evils, and fill human life with imaginary wants, and vain disquiets.

The man of pride has a thousand wants which only his own pride has created; and these render him as full of trouble, as if God had created him with a thousand appetites, without creating any thing that was proper to satisfy them. Envy and ambition have also their endless wants, which disquiet the souls of men, and by their contradictory motions, render them as foolishly miserable, as those that want to fly and creep at the same time.

Let but any complaining, disquieted man tell you the ground of his uneasiness, and you will plainly see that he is the author of his own torment; that he is vexing himself at some imaginary evil, which will cease to torment him as soon as he is content to be that which God, and nature, and reason, require him to be.

5. If you should see a man passing his days

in disquiet, because he could not walk upon the water, or catch birds as they fly by him, you would readily confess that such a one might thank himself for such uneasiness. But now if you look into the most tormenting disquiets of life, you will find them all thus absurd. People are only tormented by their own folly, and vexing themselves at such things as no more concern them, nor are any more their proper good, than walking upon the water, or catching birds.

What can you conceive more silly and extravagant, than a man racking his brains, and studying night and day how to fly? Wandering from his own house and home, wearying himself with climbing upon every ascent, cringing and courting every body he meets, to lift him up from the ground, bruising himself with continual falls, and at last breaking his neck? And all this, from an imagination that it would be glorious to have the eyes of people gazing up at him, and mighty happy to eat, and drink, and sleep, at the top of the highest trees in the country. Would you not readily own, that such a one was only disquieted at his own folly?

If you ask, what it signifies to suppose such silly creatures as are nowhere to be found in human life?

It may be answered, that wherever you see an ambitious man, there you see this vain and senseless flyer.

6. Again, if you should see a man that had a large pond of water, yet living in continual thirst, not suffering himself to drink half a draught, for

fear of lessening his pond ; if you should see him wasting his time and strength, in fetching more water to his pond, always thirsty, yet always carrying a bucket of water in his hand, watching early and late to catch the drops of rain, gaping after every cloud, and running greedily into every mire and mud, in hopes of water, and always studying how to make every ditch empty itself into his pond.—If you should see him grow gray and old in these anxious labours, and at last end a careful, thirsty life by falling into his own pond ; would you not say, that such a one was not only the author of all his own disquiets, but was foolish enough to be reckoned amongst idiots and madmen ? but yet foolish and absurd as this character is, it does not represent half the follies and absurd disquiets of the covetous man.

I could now easily proceed to show the same effects of all our other passions, and make it plainly appear, that all our miseries, vexations, and complaints, are entirely of our own making, and that in the same absurd manner, as in these instances of the covetous and ambitious man. Look where you will, you will see all worldly vexations, but like the vexations of him that was always in mire and mud in search of water to drink, when he had more at home than was sufficient for a hundred horses.

7. Cælia is always telling you how provoked she is, what intolerable shocking things happen to her, what monstrous usage she suffers, and what vexations she meets with everywhere.

She tells you that her patience is quite worn out, and that there is no bearing the behaviour of people. Every assembly that she is at, sends her home provoked; something or other has been said, or done, that no reasonable, well bred person ought to bear. Poor people that want her charity, are sent away with hasty answers; not because she has not a heart to part with any money, but because she is too full of some trouble of her own to attend to the complaints of others. Cælia has no business upon her hands, but to receive the income of a plentiful fortune; but yet by the doleful turn of her mind, you would be apt to think that she had neither food nor lodging. If you see her look more pale than ordinary, if her lips tremble when she speaks to you, it is because she has just come from a visit, where Lupus took no notice at all of her, but talked all the time to Lucinda, who has not half her fortune. When cross accidents have so disordered her spirits, that she is forced to send for the doctor to make her able to eat; she tells him, in great anger at Providence, that she never was well since she was born, and that she envies every beggar that she sees in health.

This is the unquiet life of Cælia, who has nothing to torment her but her own spirit. —

If you could inspire her with Christian humility, you need do no more to make her happy. This virtue would make her thankful to God for half so much health as she has had, and help her to enjoy more for the time to come. This

would keep off tremblings and loss of appetite, and her blood would need nothing else to sweeten it.

8. I have just touched upon these absurd characters, to convince you in the plainest manner, that religion is so far from rendering a life dull, anxious and uncomfortable, that on the contrary, all the miseries, vexations, and complaints that are in the world, are owing to the want of religion; being directly caused by those absurd passions, which religion teaches us to deny.

9. Most people indeed confess, that religion preserves us from many evils, and helps us in many respects to a more happy enjoyment of ourselves; but then, they imagine, this is only true of such a moderate share of religion, as restrains us from the excesses of our passions. They suppose that the strict rules of piety must make our lives dull and uncomfortable.

This objection supposes, that religion, moderately practised, adds to our happiness; but that heights of religion have a contrary effect.

It supposes, therefore, that it is happy to be kept from the excesses of envy, but unhappy to be kept from other degrees of envy; that it is happy to be delivered from a boundless ambition, but unhappy to be without a moderate ambition. It supposes also, that the happiness of life consists in a mixture of virtue and vice, of ambition and humility, charity and envy, heavenly affection and covetousness: all which is as absurd, as to suppose that it is happy to be free from excessive pains, but unhappy to be without

moderate pains ; or that the happiness of health consisteth in being partly sick, and partly well.

But if humility be the peace and rest of the soul, then no one has so much happiness from humility, as he that is the most humble. If excessive envy is a torment of the soul, he is most happy who extinguishes every spark of envy.

Thus it is in every virtue ; the more you act up to every degree of it, the more happiness you have from it. And so of every vice : if you only abate its excesses, you do but little for yourself ; but if you reject it in all degrees, then you feel the true case of a reformed mind.

10. And as to those enjoyments which piety requireth us to deny ourselves, this deprives us of no real comfort.

For, 1st, Piety requires us to renounce no ways of life, where we can act reasonably, and offer what we do to God. All ways of life, all enjoyments that are within these bounds, are no way denied us by the strictest rules of piety. Whatever you can do, or enjoy, as in the presence of God, as his servant, as his rational creature ; all that you can perform comfortably to a rational nature, is allowed by the laws of piety. And will you think that your life will be uncomfortable, unless you may displease God, and act contrary to that reason and wisdom which he has implanted in you ?

As for those satisfactions, which we dare not offer to a holy God, which are only invented by the folly and corruptions of the world, which inflame our passions, and sink our souls into

grossness and sensuality, and render us incapable of the Divine favour either here or hereafter ; surely it can be no uncomfortable thing to be rescued by religion from such self-murder, and to be rendered capable of eternal happiness.

11. Let us suppose a person placed somewhere alone in the midst of a variety of things which he did not know how to use ; that he has by him bread, wine, water, golden dust, iron, chains, gravel, garments, fire. Let it be supposed, that he has no knowledge, nor any directions from his senses, how to quench his thirst, or satisfy his hunger, or make any use of the things about him. Let it be supposed, that in his draught he puts golden dust into his eyes ; when his eyes smart, he puts wine into his ears ; that in his hunger, he puts gravel in his mouth ; that in pain, he loads himself with iron chains ; that feeling cold, he put his feet in the water ; that being frightened at the fire, he runs away from it ; that being weary, he makes a seat of his bread. Let it be supposed, that through his ignorance of the right use of the things that are about him, he will vainly torment himself whilst he lives ; and at last die blinded with dust, choked with gravel, and loaded with irons. Let it be supposed, that some good being came to him, and showed him the nature and use of all the things that were about him, and gave him such strict rules of using them, as would certainly if observed, make him the happier for all that he had, and deliver him from the pains of hunger, and thirst, and cold.

Now, could you with any reason affirm, that those strict rules of using those things that were about him, had rendered that poor man's life • dull and uncomfortable ?

12. This is, in some measure, a representation of the strict rules of religion ; they only relieve our ignorance, save us from tormenting ourselves, and teach us to use every thing about us to our advantage.

Man is placed in a world full of variety of things ; his ignorance makes him use many of them as absurdly as the man that put dust in his eyes to relieve his thirst, or put on chains to remove pain.

Religion therefore here comes in to his relief, and gives him strict rules of using every thing that is about him : that by so using them suitably to his own nature and the nature of the things, he may have always the pleasure of receiving benefit from them. It shows him what is strictly right in meat, and drink, and clothes ; and that he has nothing else to expect from the things of this world, but to satisfy such wants of his own ; and then to extend his assistance to all his brethren, that, as far as he is able, he may help all his fellow creatures to the same benefit from the world that he hath.

It tells him that this world is incapable of giving him any other happiness ; and that all endeavours to be happy in heaps of money, or acres of land, in fine clothes, rich beds, stately equipage, and show, and splendour, are only vain endeavours, ignorant attempts after impossibili .

ties ; these things being no more able to give the least degree of happiness, than dust in the eyes can cure thirst, or gravel in the mouth satisfy hunger ; but, like dust and gravel misapplied, will only serve to render him more unhappy by such an ignorant misuse of them.

It tells him, although this world can do no more for him than satisfy these wants of the body, yet there is a much greater good prepared for man, than eating, drinking, and dressing ; that it is yet invisible to his eyes, being too glorious for the apprehension of flesh and blood ; but reserved for him to enter upon, as soon as this short life is over ; where, in a new body, formed to an angelic likeness, he shall dwell in the light and glory of God to all eternity.

It tells him, that this state of glory will be given to all those that make a right use of the things of this present world ; who do not blind themselves with golden dust, or eat gravel, or groan under loads of iron of their own putting on ; but use bread, water, wine, and garments, for such ends as are according to nature and reason ; and who with faith and thankfulness, worship the kind Giver of all that they enjoy here, and hope for hereafter.

13. Now can any one say that the strictest rules of such a religion as this, debar us of any of the comforts of life ? Might it not as justly be said of those rules, that only hindered a man from choking himself with gravel ? For the strictness of these rules only consists in the exactness of their rectitude.

Who would complain of the severe strictness of a law, that without any exception forbade the putting of dust into our eyes! Who could think it too rigid, that there were no abatements? Now this is the strictness of religion; it requires nothing of us strictly, or without abatements, but where every degree of the thing is wrong, where every indulgence does us hurt.

14. If religion forbids all instances of revenge without any exception, it is because all revenge is of the nature of poison; and though we do not take so much as to put an end to life, yet if we take any at all, it corrupts the mass of blood, and makes it difficult to be restored to our former health.

If religion commands a universal charity, to love our neighbour as ourselves, to forgive and pray for all our enemies without any reserve; it is because all degrees of love are degrees of happiness, that strengthen and support the divine life of the soul, and are as necessary to its health and happiness, as proper food is necessary to the health and happiness of the body.

If religion has laws against laying up treasures upon earth, and commands us to be content with food and raiment; it is because every other use of the world is abusing it to our own vexation, and turning its conveniences into snares and traps to destroy us. It is because this plainness and simplicity of life, secure us from the cares and pains of restless pride and envy, and make it easier to keep that strait road that will carry us to eternal life.

15. If religion requires us sometimes to fast and deny our natural appetites, it is to lessen that struggle and war that is in our nature ; it is to render our bodies fitter instruments of purity, and more obedient to the good motions of divine grace ; it is to dry up the springs of our passions that war against the soul, to cool the flame of our blood, and render the mind more capable of divine meditations. So that although these abstinences give some pain to the body, yet they so lessen the power of bodily appetites and passions, and so increase our taste of spiritual joys, that even these severities of religion, when practised with discretion, add much to the comfort of our lives.

If religion calleth us to a life of watching and prayer, it is because we live amongst a crowd of enemies, and are always in need of the assistance of God. If we are to confess and bewail our sins, it is because such confessions relieve the mind, and restore it to ease ; as burdens and weights taken off the shoulders, relieve the body, and make it easier to itself. If we are to be frequent and fervent in holy petitions, it is to keep us steady in the sight of our true good, and that we may never want the happiness of a lively faith, a joyful hope, and a well grounded trust in God. If we are to pray often, it is that we may be often happy in such secret joys as only prayer can give ; in such communications of the Divine presence, as will fill our minds with all the happiness that beings not in heaven are capable of.

If religion commands us to live wholly unto God, and to do all to his glory, it is because every other way is living wholly against ourselves, and will end in our shame and confusion of face.

16. As every thing is dark, that God does not enlighten ; as every thing is senseless, that has not its share of knowledge from him ; as nothing lives, but by partaking of life from him ; as nothing exists, but because he commands it to be ; so there is no glory or greatness, but what is the glory or greatness of God.

We indeed may talk of human glory, as we may talk of human life or human knowledge ; but as we are sure that human life implies nothing of our own but a dependant living in God, or enjoying so much life in God ; so human glory, whenever we find it, must be only so much glory as we enjoy in the glory of God.

This is the state of all creatures, whether men, or angels ; as they make not themselves, so if they are great, they are only great receivers of the gifts of God ; their power can only be so much of the Divine power acting in them ; their wisdom can be only so much of the Divine wisdom shining within them ; and their light and glory, only so much of the light and glory of God shining upon them.

17. As they are not men and angels, because they had a mind to be so, but because the will of God formed them to be what they are ; so they cannot enjoy this or that happiness of men or angels, because they have a mind to it, but

because it is the will of God that such things be the happiness of men, and such things the happiness of angels. But now, if God be thus all in all ; if his will is thus the measure of all things and all natures ; if nothing can be done, but by his power ; if nothing can be seen, but by a light from him ; if we have nothing to fear, but from his justice ; if we have nothing to hope for, but from his goodness ; if this is the nature of man, thus helpless in himself ; if this is the state of all creatures, as well those in heaven as those on earth ; if they are nothing, can do nothing, can suffer no pain, nor feel any happiness, but so far, and in such degrees, as the power of God does all this : if this be the state of things, then how can we have the least glimpse of joy or comfort ? How can we have any peaceful enjoyment of ourselves, but by living wholly unto God, using and doing every thing conformably to his will ? A life thus devoted unto God, looking wholly unto him in all our actions, and doing all things suitable to his glory, is so far from being dull and uncomfortable, that it creates new comforts in every thing that we do.

18. On the contrary, would you see how happy they are, who live according to their own wills, who cannot submit to the dull and melancholy business of a life devoted to God ? Look at the man in the parable, to whom his Lord had given one talent.

He could not bear the thoughts of using his talent according to the will of him from whom

he had it, and therefore he chose to make himself happier in another way of his own. "Lord," says he, "I knew thee, that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hadst not sown, and gathering where thou hadst not strowed. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, here thou hast that is thine." Matt. xxv, 24.

Here you see how happy this man made himself by not acting wholly according to his Lord's will. It was, according to his own account, a happiness of murmuring and discontent; I knew thee, says he, that thou wast a hard man: it was a happiness of fears and apprehensions; I was, says he, afraid: it was a happiness of vain labours and fruitless travails; I went, says he, and hid thy talent; and after having been awhile the sport of foolish passions, tormenting fears, and fruitless labours, he is rewarded with eternal darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

19. Now, this is the happiness of all those, who look upon strict piety, that is, a right use of their talent, to be a dull and melancholy thing.

They may live awhile free from the restraints and directions of religion; but instead thereof, they must be under the absurd government of their passions; they must, like the man in the parable, live in murmurings and discontents, in fears and apprehensions. They may avoid the labour of doing good, of spending their time devoutly, of laying up treasures in heaven, of clothing the naked, of visiting the sick: but then they must, like this man, have labours and pains

in vain, that tend to no use or advantage, that do no good either to themselves or others ; they must travel, and labour, and work, and dig, to hide their talent in the earth. They must, like him, at their Lord's coming, be convicted out of their own mouths, be accused by their own hearts, and have every thing that they have said and thought of religion, be made to show the justice of their condemnation to eternal darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

This is the purchase that they make, who avoid the strictness of religion, in order to live happily.

20. On the other hand, would you see a short description of the happiness of a life rightly employed, wholly devoted to God, you must look at the man in the parable, to whom his Lord had given five talents. "Lord," says he, "thou deliveredst unto me five talents ; behold I have gained beside them five talents more." His Lord said unto him, "Well done thou good and faithful servant : thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Here you see a life that is wholly intent upon the improvement of the talents, that is devoted unto God, is a state of happiness, prosperous labours, and glorious success. Here are not, as in the former case, any uneasy passions, murmurings, vain fears, and fruitless labours. The man is not toiling, and digging in the earth for no end or advantage ; but his labours prosper in his hands, his happiness increases upon him,

the blessing of five becomes the blessing of ten talents ; and he is received with a “ well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

21. Now, as the case of these men in the parable left nothing else to their choice, but either to be happy in using their gifts to the glory of their Lord, or miserable by using them according to their own humours and fancies ; so the state of Christianity leaves us no other choice.

All that we have, all that we are, all that we enjoy, are only so many talents from God : if we use them to the end of a pious and holy life, our five talents will become ten, and our labours will carry us into the joy of our Lord ; but if we abuse them to the gratification of our own passions, sacrificing the gifts of God to our own pride and vanity, we shall live here in vain labours and foolish anxieties, shunning religion as a melancholy thing, accusing our Lord as a hard master, and then fall into everlasting misery.

We may for awhile amuse ourselves with names, and sounds, and shadows of happiness ; we may talk of this or that greatness and dignity ; but if we desire real happiness, we have no other possible way to it, but by improving our talents by so holily and piously using the powers and faculties of men in this present state, that we may be happy and glorious in the powers and faculties of angels in the world to come.

How ignorant, therefore, are they of the na-

ture of religion, of the nature of man, and the nature of God, who think a life of strict piety to be a dull and uncomfortable state ; when it is so plain and certain, that there is neither comfort nor joy to be found in any thing else ?

CHAPTER X.

The happiness of a life wholly devoted unto God, further proved, from the vanity, and the ridiculous, poor enjoyments which they are forced to take up with, who live according to their own humours. This represented in various characters.

1. WE may see yet more of the happiness of a life devoted to God, by considering the poor contrivances for happiness, and the contemptible ways of life, which they are thrown into, who are seeking after happiness by other methods.

If one looks at their lives, who live by no rule but their own humours and fancies ; if one sees what it is which they call joy, and greatness, and happiness ; if one sees how they rejoice and repent, change and fly from one delusion to another, one shall find great reason to rejoice, that God hath appointed a narrow way that leadeth unto life, and that we are not left to the folly of our own minds, or forced to take up with such shadows of happiness, as the folly of the world has invented. I say invented, because those things which make up the joy and happiness of the world, are mere inventions, which have no foundation in nature, are no way the

proper good or happiness of man, no way perfect either his body or his mind.

2. As, for instance, when a man proposes to be happy in ways of ambition, by raising himself to some imaginary heights above other people. This is an invention of happiness which has no foundation in nature, but is as mere a cheat of our own making, as if a man should intend to make himself happy by climbing up a ladder.

If a woman seeks for happiness from fine colours or spots upon her face, from jewels and rich clothes, this is as merely an invention of happiness, as contrary to nature and reason, as if she should propose to make herself happy by painting a post, and putting the same finery upon it. It is in this respect that I call these mere inventions of happiness, because neither God, nor nature, nor reason, hath appointed them as such ; but whatever appears joyful or happy in them, is entirely invented by the blindness and vanity of our own minds.

And it is on these inventions of happiness, that I desire you to cast your eye, that you may thence learn how great a good religion is, which delivers you from such a multitude of follies and vain pursuits, as are the torment of minds that wander from their true happiness in God.

3. Look at Flatus, and learn how miserable they are, who are left to the folly of their own passions.

Flatus is rich and in health, yet always uneasy, and always searching after happiness. Every

time you visit him, you find some new project in his head ; he is eager upon it as something that is more worth his while, and will do more for him than any thing that is already past. Every new thing so seizes him, that if you were to take him from it, he would think himself quite undone. His sanguine temper, and strong passions, promise him so much happiness, in every thing, that he is always cheated, and is satisfied with nothing.

At his first setting out in life, fine clothes were his delight. His inquiry was only after the best tailors and peruke makers ; and he had no thoughts of excelling in any thing but dress ; he spared no expense, but carried every nicety to its greatest height. But this happiness not answering his expectations, he left off his broidades, put on a plain coat, railed at fops, and beaux, and gave himself up to gaming with great eagerness.

This new pleasure satisfied him for some time ; he envied no other way of life. But being by the fate of play drawn into a duel, where he narrowly escaped his death, he left off the dice, and sought for happiness no longer amongst the gamesters.

4. The next thing that seized his wandering imagination, was the diversions of the town ; and for more than a twelvemonth, you heard him talk of nothing but ladies, drawing rooms, birthnights, plays, balls, and assemblies : but growing sick of these, he had recourse to hard drinking. He had now many a merry night,

and met with stronger joys than any he had felt before. And here he had thoughts of setting up his staff, and looking out no further; but unluckily falling into a fever, he grew angry at all strong liquors, and took his leave of the happiness of being drunk.

The next attempt after happiness carried him into the field. For two or three years nothing was so happy as hunting. He entered upon it with all his soul, and leaped over more hedges and ditches than had ever been known in so short a time. You never saw him but in a green coat. He was the envy of all that blew the horn, and always spoke to his dogs in great propriety of language. If you met him at home in a bad day, you would hear him blow his horn and be entertained with the surprising accidents of the last noble chase. No sooner had Flatus outdone all the world in the breed and education of his dogs, built new kennels, new stables, and bought a new hunting seat, but he got sight of another happiness, hated the senseless noise and hurry of hunting, gave away his dogs, and was for some time after deep in the pleasures of building.

5. Now he invents new kinds of dove cotes, and has such contrivances in his barns and stables, as were never seen before. He wonders at the dulness of the old builders, is wholly bent upon the improvement of architecture, and will hardly hang a door in the ordinary way. He tells his friends, that he never was so delighted in any thing in his life; that he has more hap-

piness amongst his brick and mortar, than ever he had at court: and that he is contriving how to have some little matter to do that way as long as he lives.

After this, he was a great student for one whole year. He was up early and late at his Italian grammar, that he might have the happiness of understanding the opera, and not to be like those unreasonable people, that are pleased with they don't know what.

Flatus is very illnatured, or otherwise, just as his affairs happen to be when you visit him. If you find him when some project is almost worn out, you will find a peevish, illbred man: but if you had seen him just as he entered upon his riding regimen, or begun to excel in sounding the horn, you had been saluted with great civility.

Flatus is now at a full stand, and is doing what he never did in his life before. He is reasoning and reflecting with himself. He loses several days, in considering which of his cast off ways of life he should try again.

But here a new project comes in to his relief.—He is now living upon herbs, and running about the country, to get himself in as good wind as any running footman in the kingdom.

6. I have been thus circumstantial in so many foolish particulars, because I hope that every particular folly that you here see, will naturally turn itself into an argument for the wisdom and happiness of a religious life.

If I could lay before you a particular account of all the circumstances of terror and distress,

that daily attend a life at sea, the more particular I was in the account, the more I should make you feel and rejoice in the happiness of living upon the land.

In like manner, the more I enumerate the follies, anxieties, delusions, and restless desires which go through every part of a life devoted to worldly enjoyments, the more you must be affected with that peace, and rest, and solid content, which religion gives to the souls of men.

7. But you will perhaps say, that the ridiculous, restless life of Flatus, is not the common state of those who neglect the strict rules of religion; and that therefore it is not so great an argument of the happiness of a religious life.

I answer that I am afraid it is one of the most general characters in life; and that few people can read it, without seeing something in it that belongs to themselves. For where shall we find that wise and happy man, who has not been eagerly pursuing different appearances of happiness, sometimes thinking it was here, and sometimes there?

And if people were to divide their lives into particular stages, and ask themselves what they were pursuing, or what it was which they had chiefly in view when they were twenty years old, what at twenty-five, what at thirty, what at forty, what at fifty, and so on, till they were brought to their last bed; numbers of people would find that they had pursued as many different appearances of happiness, as are to be seen in the life of Flatus.

And thus it must be, more or less, with all who propose any other happiness, than that which arises from a strict and regular piety.

8. But secondly, let it be granted, that the generality of people are not of such restless, fickle tempers as Flatus ; the difference is only this, Flatus is continually changing and trying something new, but others are content with some one state ; they do not leave gaming, and then fall into hunting, but follow one or the other all their life. Some have so much steadiness in their tempers, that they seek after no other happiness, but that of heaping up riches ; others grow old in the sports of the field ; others are content to drink themselves to death, without the least inquiry after any other happiness.

Now is there any thing more happy or reasonable in such life as this, than in the life of Flatus ? Is it not as wise and happy, to be constantly changing from one thing to another, as to be nothing else but a gatherer of money, a hunter, a gamester, or a drunkard all your life ?

Shall religion be looked upon as a burden, as a dull and melancholy state for calling men from such happiness as this, to labour after the perfection of their nature, and prepare themselves for an endless state of joy and glory in the presence of our God.

9. But turn your eyes now another way, and let the trifling joys, the gewgaw happiness of Feliciana, teach you how wise they are, what delusion they escape, whose hearts and hopes are fixed upon happiness in God ?

If you were to live with Felicana but one half year, you would see all the happiness that she is to have as long as she lives. She has no more to come, but the poor repetition of that which could never have pleased once but through a littleness of mind and want of thought.

She is to be again dressed fine, and keep her visiting day. She is again to change the colour of her clothes, again to have a new head. She is again to see who acts best at the playhouse, and who sings finest at the opera. She is again to make ten visits in a day, and be ten times in a day trying to talk artfully, easily, and politely about nothing.

She is to be again delighted with some new fashion, and again angry at the change of some old one. She is to be again at cards, and gaming at midnight, and again in bed at noon. She is to be again pleased with hypocritical compliments, and again disturbed with imaginary affronts. She is to be again delighted with her good luck at gaming, and again tormented with the loss of her money. She is again to prepare herself for a birthnight, and again to see the town full of good company. She is again to hear the cabals and intrigues of the town, again to have secret intelligence of private amours, and early notice of marriages, quarrels, and partings.

If you see her come out of her chariot more briskly than usual, converse with more spirit, and seem fuller of joy than she was last week, it is because there is some surprising new dress, or new diversion just come to town.

10. These are all the substantial and regular parts of Felicia's happiness ; and she never knew a pleasant day in her life, but it was owing to some one or more of these things.

It is for this happiness, that she has always been deaf to the reasonings of religion, that her heart has been too gay and cheerful to consider what is right or wrong in regard to eternity ; or to listen to the sound of such dull words, as wisdom, piety, and devotion.

It is for fear of losing some of this happiness, that she dares not meditate on the immortality of her soul, consider her relation to God, or turn her thoughts towards those joys which make saints and angels infinitely happy in the presence and glory of God.

But let it be observed, that as poor a round of happiness as this appears, yet most women that avoid the restraints of religion for a gay life, must be content with very small parts of it. As they have not Felicia's fortune, so they must give away the comforts of a pious life, for a very small part of her happiness.

11. And if you look into the world, and observe the lives of those women, whom no arguments can persuade to live wholly unto God, you will find most of them such, as lose all the comforts of religion without gaining the tenth part of Felicia's happiness. They are such as spend their time and fortunes, only in mimicking the pleasures of richer people ; and rather look and long after, than enjoy those delusions,

which are not to be purchased but by considerable fortunes.

But if a woman of high birth, and great fortune, having read the gospel, should rather wish to be an under servant in some pious family, where wisdom, piety, and great devotion directed all the actions of every day ; if she should rather wish this, than to live at the top of Feliciana's happiness, I should think her neither mad, nor melancholy ; but that she judged as rightly of the spirit of the gospel, as if she had rather wished to be poor Lazarus at the gate, than to be the rich man "clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day."

12. But to proceed : would you know what a happiness it is, to be governed by the wisdom of religion, look at the poor condition of Succus, whose greatest happiness is a good night's rest in bed, and a good meal when he is up. When he talks of happiness, it is always in such expressions as show you, that he has only his bed and his dinner in his thoughts.

This regard to his meals and repose makes Succus order all the rest of his time with relation to them. He will undertake no business that may hurry his spirits, or break in upon his hours of eating and rest. If he reads, it shall be only for half an hour, because that is sufficient to amuse the spirits ; and he will read something that may make him laugh, as rendering the body fitter for its food and rest ; or, if he has a mind at any time to indulge a grave thought, he has recourse to a useful treatise

upon the ancient cookery. Succus is an enemy to all party matters, having made it an observation, that there is as good eating amongst the whigs as the tories.

He talks coolly and moderately upon all subjects, and is as fearful of falling into a passion, as of catching cold; being very positive they are both equally injurious to the stomach. If ever you see him more hot than ordinary, it is upon some provoking occasion, when the dispute about cookery runs high, or in the defence of some beloved dish, which has often made him happy. But he has been so long upon these subjects, is so well acquainted with all that can be said on both sides, and has so often answered all objections, that he generally decides the matter with great gravity.

Succus is very loyal, and as soon as ever he likes any wine, he drinks the king's health with all his heart. Nothing could put rebellious thoughts into his head, unless he should live to see a proclamation against eating of pheasant's eggs.

13. All the hours that are not devoted either to repose or nourishment, are looked upon by Succus as waste or spare time. For this reason he lodges near a coffee-house and a tavern, that when he rises in the morning he may be near the news, and when he parts at night he may not have far to go to bed. In the morning you always see him in the same place in the coffee-room; and if he seems more attentively engaged than ordinary, it is because some criminal

has broke out of Newgate, or some lady was robbed last night, but they cannot tell where. When he has learned all that he can, he goes home to settle the matter with the barber's boy that comes to shave him.

The next waste time that lays upon his hands, is from dinner to supper; and if melancholy thoughts ever come into his head, it is at this time, when he is often left to himself for an hour or more, and that after the greatest pleasure he knows is just over.—He is afraid to sleep, because he has heard it is not healthful at that time; so that he has forced to refuse so welcome a guest.

But here he is soon relieved by a settled method of playing at cards, till it is time to think of some little nice matter for supper.

After this Succus takes his glass, talks of the excellency of the English constitution, and praises that minister the most, who keeps the best table.

On a Sunday night you may sometimes hear him condemning the iniquity of town rakes; and the bitterest thing that he says against them is this, that he verily believes, some of them are so abandoned, as not to have a regular meal, or a sound night's sleep in a week.

At eleven, Succus bids all good night, and parts in great friendship. He is presently in bed, and sleeps till it is time to go to the coffee-house next morning.

If you were to live with Succus for a twelve-month, this is all that you would see in his life,

except a few curses and oaths that he uses as occasion offers.

And now I cannot help making this reflection :

14. That as I believe the most likely means in the world to inspire a person with a true piety, was to have seen the example of some eminent professors of religion : so the next thing that is likely to fill us with the same zeal, is to see the folly, the baseness, and poor satisfactions of a life destitute of religion. As the one excites us to love and admire the wisdom and greatness of religion ; so the other may make us fearful of living without it.

For who can help blessing God for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory, when he sees what variety of folly they sink into, who live without it ? Who would not heartily engage in all the labours of a pious life, when he sees what dull sensuality, what gross enjoyments they are left to, who seek for happiness in other ways ?

So that whether we consider the greatness of religion, or the littleness of all other things, and the meanness of all other enjoyments, there is nothing to be found in the whole nature of things, for a thoughtful mind to rest upon, but a happiness in religion.

15. Consider now with yourself, how unreasonably it is pretended, that a life of strict piety must be a dull and anxious state ? For can it with any reason be said, that the duties of religion render our lives heavy and melancholy, when they only deprive us of such happiness as has been here laid before you ?

Must it be tedious to live in, the continual exercise of charity and temperance, to act wisely and virtuously, to do good to the utmost of your power, to imitate the Divine perfections, and prepare yourself for the enjoyment of God? Must it be dull and tiresome to improve in holiness, to feel the comforts of conscience in all your actions, to know that God is your friend, that all must work for your good; that neither life nor death, neither men nor devils, can do you any harm; but that all your sufferings and doings are in a short time to be rewarded with everlasting glory; must such a state be dull and tiresome, for want of such happiness as Flatus or Feliciana enjoys?

Now, if this cannot be said, then there is no happiness lost by being strictly pious; nor has the devout man any thing to envy in any other state of life. For all the art and contrivances in the world, without religion, cannot make more of human life, or carry its happiness to any greater height than Flatus or Feliciana have done.

The finest wit, the greatest genius upon earth, if not governed by religion, must be as foolish, and low, and vain, in his method of happiness, as the poor Succus.

16. If you were to see a man dully endeavoring all his life to satisfy his thirst, by holding up one and the same empty cup to his mouth, you would certainly despise his ignorance.

But, if you should see others of brighter parts, and finer understandings, ridiculing the dull satis-

faction of one cup, and thinking to satisfy their own thirst by variety of gilt and golden empty cups ; would you think that these were ever the wiser, or happier, or better employed, for their finer parts ?

Now, this is all the difference that you can see in the happiness of this life.

The dull and heavy soul may be content with one empty appearance of happiness, and be continually trying to hold the same empty cup to his mouth all his life. But let the wit, the deep scholar, the fine genius, the great statesman, the polite gentleman, lay all their heads together, and they can only show you more and various empty appearances of happiness ; give them all the world in their hands, let them cut and carve as they please, they can only make a greater variety of empty cups.

So that if you do not think it hard to be deprived of the pleasures of gluttony, for the sake of religion, you have no reason to think it hard to be restrained from any worldly pleasure. For search as deep, and look as far as you will, there is nothing here to be found, that is nobler, or greater, than high eating and drinking, unless you look for it in the wisdom of religion.

And if all that is in the world are only so many empty cups, what does it signify which you take, or how many ?

17. If you would but use yourself to such meditations as these, to reflect upon the vanity of all orders of life without piety, to consider how all the ways of the world, are only so many

different ways of error, blindness, and mistake ; these meditations would awaken your soul into a zealous desire of that solid happiness which is only to be found in recourse to God.

18. To meditate upon the perfection of the Divine attributes, to contemplate the glories of heaven, to consider the joys of saints and angels living for ever in the brightness and glory of the Divine presence ; these are the meditations of souls advanced in piety, and not suited to every capacity.

But to see and consider the emptiness and error of all worldly happiness ; to see the grossness of sensuality, the poorness of pride, the stupidity of covetousness, the vanity of dress, the blindness of our passions, the uncertainty of our lives, and the shortness of all worldly projects ; these are meditations that are suited to all capacities. They require no depth of thought, or sublime speculation ; but are forced upon us by all our senses, and taught by almost every thing that we see and hear.

This is that “ wisdom that crieth, and putteth forth her voice in the streets,” Prov. viii, 1, that standeth at all our doors, that appealeth to all our senses, teaching us in every thing and every where, by all that we see, and all that we hear, by births and burials, by sickness and health, by life and death, by pains and poverty, by misery and vanity, and by all the changes of life, that there is nothing else for man to look after, no other end in nature for him to drive at, but a happiness in religion.

CHAPTER XI.

That not only a life of vanity, or sensuality, but even the most regular kind of life, that is not governed by great devotion, sufficiently shows its miseries, its wants, and emptiness to the eyes of all the world. This represented in various characters.

1. OCTAVIUS is a learned, ingenious man, well versed in most parts of literature, and no stranger to any kingdom in Europe. The other day, being just recovered from a lingering fever, he took upon him to talk thus to his friends :

“ My glass,” says he, “ is almost run out ; and your eyes see how many marks of age and death I bear about me : but I plainly feel myself sinking away faster than any standers-by imagine. I fully believe, that one year more will conclude my reckoning.”

The attention of his friends was much raised by such a declaration, expecting to hear something truly excellent from so learned a man, who had but a year longer to live : when Octavius proceeded in this manner, “ For these reasons,” says he. “ my friends, I have left off all taverns ; the wine of those places is not good enough for me in this decay of nature. I must now be nice in what I drink. I cannot pretend to do as I have done ; and therefore I am resolved to furnish my own cellar with a little of the very best, though it cost me ever so much.”

2. A few days after Octavius had made this declaration to his friends, he relapsed into his

former illness, was committed to a nurse, who closed his eyes before his fresh parcel of wine came in.

Young Eugenius, who was present at this discourse, went home a new man.

I never, says Eugenius, was so deeply affected with the wisdom and importance of religion, as when I saw how poorly and meanly the learned Octavius was to leave the world through the want of it.

3. Was all to die with our bodies, there might be some pretence for those different sorts of happiness, that are now so much talked of: but since our all begins at the death of our bodies; since all men are to be immortal, either in misery or happiness, in a world entirely different from this; since they are all hastening thence at all uncertainties, as fast as death can cut them down; some in sickness, some in health, some sleeping, some waking, some at midnight, others at cock crowing, and all at hours they know not of; is it not certain, that no man can exceed another in joy and happiness, but so far as he exceeds him in those virtues which fit him for a happy death?

4. Cognatus is a sober, regular clergyman, of good repute in the world, and well esteemed in his parish. All his parishioners say, he is an honest man, and very notable at making a bargain. The farmers listen to him with great attention, when he talks of the properest time of selling corn.

He has been for twenty years a diligent ob-

server of markets, and has raised a considerable fortune by good management.

Cognatus is very orthodox, and full of esteem for our English liturgy ; and if he has not prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, it is because his predecessor had not used the parish to any such custom. As he cannot serve both his livings himself, so he makes it a matter of conscience to keep a sober curate upon one of them, whom he hires to take care of all the souls in the parish, at as cheap a rate as a sober man can be procured.

Cognatus has been very prosperous all his time ; but still he has had the uneasiness and vexations that they have, who are deep in worldly business. Taxes, losses, crosses, bad mortgages, bad tenants, and the hardness of the times, are frequent subjects of his conversation ; and a good or bad season has a great effect upon his spirits.

Cognatus has no other end in growing rich, but that he may leave a considerable fortune to a niece whom he has politely educated in expensive finery, by what he has saved out of the tithes of two livings.

The neighbours look upon Cognatus as a happy clergyman, because they see him (as they call it) in good circumstances ; and some of them intend to dedicate their own sons to the church, because they see how well it has succeeded with Cognatus, whose father was but an ordinary man.

5. But now if Cognatus, when he first en-

tered into holy orders, had perceived how absurd a thing it is to grow rich by the gospel ; if he had proposed to himself the example of some primitive father ; if, instead of twenty years care to lay up treasures upon earth, he had distributed the income of every year in the most Christian acts of charity :

If, instead of tempting his niece to be proud, and providing her with such ornaments as the apostle forbids, he had clothed, comforted, and relieved numbers of widows and orphans, who were all to appear for him at the last day :

If, instead of the cares and anxieties of bad bonds, troublesome mortgages, and ill bargains, he had had the constant comfort of knowing, that his treasure was securely laid up, where neither moth corrupteth, nor thieves break through and steal ; could it with any reason be said, that he had mistaken the spirit and dignity of his order, or lessened any of that happiness which is to be found in his sacred employment ?

If, instead of rejoicing in the happiness of a second living, he had thought it as unbecoming the office of a clergyman to traffic for gain in holy things, as to open a shop :

If he had thought it better to recommend some honest labour to his niece, than to support her in idleness by the labour of a curate ; better that she should want fine clothes and a rich husband, than that cures of souls should be farmed out, and brother clergymen not suffered to live by those altars at which they serve. If this had been the spirit of Cognatus, could it with any

reason be said, that these rules of religion, this strictness of piety, had robbed Cognatus of any real happiness? Could it be said, that a life thus governed by the spirit of the gospel, must be dull and melancholy, if compared to that of raising a fortune for a niece?

6. Look now at that condition of life which draws the envy of all.

Negotius is a temperate, honest man. He served his time under a master of great trade; but has by his own management, made it a more considerable business than ever it was before. For thirty years last past, he has been corresponding with all parts of Europe. The general good of trade seems to Negotius to be the general good of life; whatever he commends or condemns, either in church or state, is commended or condemned, with regard to trade.

As money is continually pouring in upon him; so he often lets it go in various kinds of expense and generosity, and sometimes in ways of charity.

Negotius is always ready to join in any public contribution. If a purse is making at any place where he happens to be, whether it be to buy a plate for a horserace, or to redeem a prisoner out of jail, you are always sure of having something from him.

He has given a fine ring of bells to a church in the country; and there is much expectation that he will some time or other make a more beautiful front to the market-house, than has yet been seen in any place: for it is the ge-

nerous spirit of Negotius, to do nothing in a mean way.

7. If you ask what it is that has secured Negotius from all scandalous vices, it is the same thing that has kept him from all strictness of devotion: it is his great business. He has always had too many important things in his head: his thoughts are too much employed, to suffer him to fall either into a course of rakery, or to feel the necessity of an inward solid piety.

For this reason he hears of the pleasures of debauchery, and the pleasures of piety, with the same indifference! and has no more desire of living in the one than in the other, because neither of them consists with that turn of mind, and multiplicity of business, which are his happiness.

If Negotius was asked, what it is which he drives at in life, he would be as much at a loss for an answer, as if he was asked what any other person is thinking of. For though he always seems to himself to know what he is doing, and has many things in his head, which are the motives of his actions: yet he cannot tell you of any one general end of life that he has chosen with deliberation, as being truly worthy of all his labour and pains.

He has several confused notions in his head, which have been a long time there: such as these; that it is something great to have more business than other people, to have more dealings upon his hands than a hundred of the same profession; to grow continually richer and richer,

and to raise an immense fortune before he dies. The thing that seems to give Negotius the greatest life and spirit, and to be most in his thoughts, is an expectation that he shall die richer than any of his business ever did.

8. The generality of people, when they think of happiness, think upon Negotius ; in whose life every instance of happiness is supposed to meet ; sober, prudent, rich, prosperous, generous and charitable.

Let us now look at this condition in another, but truer light.

Let it be supposed, that this same Negotius was a painful laborious man, very deep in variety of affairs ; that he neither drank nor debauched, but was sober and regular in his business. Let it be supposed, that he grew old in this course of trading ; and that the end and design of all his labour, and care, and application to business, was only this, that he might die possessed of more than a hundred thousand pair of boots and spurs.

Let it be supposed, that the sober part of the world say of him when he is dead, that he was a great and happy man, a thorough master of business, and had acquired a hundred thousand pair of boots and spurs when he died.

9. Now, if this was really the case, I believe it would be readily granted, that a life of such business was as poor and ridiculous as any that can be invented. But it would puzzle any one to show that a man that has spent all his time and thoughts in business and hurry, that he might die,

as it is said, worth a hundred thousand pounds, is any whit wiser than he, who has taken the same pains to have as many pairs of boots and spurs when he leaves the world.

For if the state of our souls be our whole state ; if the only end of life be to die as free from sin, and as exalted in virtue as we can ; if naked as we came, so naked are we to return, and to stand a trial before Christ and his holy angels, for everlasting happiness or misery, what can it possibly signify, what a man had, or had not in this world ? What can it signify what you call these things that a man left behind him : whether you call them his or any one's else ; whether you call them trees, or fields, or birds and feathers ; whether you call them a hundred thousand pounds, or a hundred thousand pair of boots and spurs ? I say *call* them ; for the things signify no more to him than the names.

Now it is easy to see the folly of a life thus spent to furnish a man with such a number of boots and spurs. But yet there needs no better faculty of seeing, no finer understanding, to see the folly of a life spent in making a man possessor of ten towns before he dies.

For if, when he has got all his towns, or all his boots, his soul is to go into its own place amongst separate spirits, and his body be laid by in a coffin, till the last trumpet calls him to judgment ; where the inquiry will be, how humbly, how devoutly, how meekly, how piously, how charitably, we have spoken, thought and acted, whilst we were in the body ? How can

we say, that he who has worn out his life in raising a hundred thousand pounds, has acted wiser for himself than he who has had the same care to procure a hundred thousand of any thing else ?

10. But further : let it now be supposed, that Negotius, when he first entered into business, happening to read the gospel with attention, found he had a much greater business upon his hands, than that to which he had served an apprenticeship ; that there were things which belong to man, of much more importance than all that our eyes can see : so glorious, as to deserve all our thoughts : so dangerous, as to need all our care : and so certain, as never to deceive the faithful labourer.

Let it be supposed, that by reading this book, he had discovered that his soul was more to him than his body : that it was better to grow in the virtues of the soul than to have a large body, or a full purse ; that it was better to be fit for heaven, than to have a variety of fine houses upon earth ; that it was better to secure an everlasting happiness, than to have plenty of things which he cannot keep ; better to live in habits of humility, piety, charity, and self denial, than to die unprepared for judgment ; better to be most like our Saviour than to excel all the tradesmen in the world, in business and bulk of fortune.

Let it be supposed, that Negotius, believing these things to be true, entirely devoted himself to God at his first setting out in the world, resolving to pursue his business no further than

was consistent with great devotion, humility, and self denial; and for no other ends, but to provide himself with a sober subsistence, and to do all the good he could to the souls and bodies of his fellow creatures.

11. Let it therefore be supposed, that instead of the continual hurry of business, he was frequent in his retirements: that instead of restless desires after more riches, his soul had been full of the love of God and heavenly affection, constantly watching against worldly tempers, and always aspiring after divine grace; that instead of worldly cares and contrivances, he had been busy in fortifying his soul against all approaches of sin; that instead of costly show, and the expensive generosity of a splendid life, he had loved and exercised all instances of humility and lowliness; that instead of great treats and full tables, his house had only furnished a sober refreshment to those that wanted it.

Let it be supposed, that his contentment kept him free from all kinds of envy. That his piety made him thankful to God in all crosses and disappointments. That his charity kept him from being rich, by a continual distribution to all objects of compassion.

12. Now had this been the Christian spirit of Negotius, can any one say, that he had lost the true happiness of life, by thus conforming to the spirit, and living up to the hope of the gospel?

Can it be said, that a life made exemplary by such virtues as these, which keep heaven always in our sight, which doth delight and exalt the soul

here, and prepare it for the presence of God hereafter, must be poor and dull, if compared to that of heaping up riches, which can neither stay with us, nor we with them.

It would be endless to multiply examples of this kind, to show you how little is lost, and how much is gained, by introducing a strict and exact piety into every condition of human life.

I shall now therefore leave it to your own meditation, to carry this way of thinking further, hoping that enough is said, to convince yourself, that an exalted piety is so far from rendering any life dull and tiresome, that it is the only joy and happiness of any condition in the world.

13. Imagine to yourself some person in a consumption, or any other lingering distemper, that was incurable.

If you were to see such a man wholly intent upon doing every thing in the spirit of religion, making the wisest use of all his time, fortune and abilities. If he was for carrying every duty of piety to its greatest height, and striving to have all the advantage that could be had in the remainder of his life. If he avoided all business, but such as was necessary ; if he was averse to all the follies and vanities of the world, had no taste for finery and show, but sought for all his comfort in the hopes and expectations of religion ; you would certainly commend his prudence, you would say that he had taken the right method to make himself as joyful and happy, as any one can be in a state of such infirmity.

On the other hand, if you should see the same person, with trembling hands, short breath, thin jaws, and hollow eyes, wholly intent upon business and bargains, as long as he could speak : if you should see him pleased with fine clothes, when he could scarce stand to be dressed, and laying out his money in horses and dogs, rather than purchase the prayers of the poor for his soul, which was so soon to be separated from his body, you would certainly condemn him as a weak, silly man.

14. Now as it is easy to see the reasonableness, the wisdom and happiness of a religious spirit in a consumptive man, so if you pursue the same way of thinking, you will as easily perceive the same wisdom and happiness of a pious temper, in every other state of life.

For how soon will any man that is in health, be in the state of him that is in a consumption ? How soon will he want all the same comforts of religion, which every dying man wants ?

And if it be wise and happy to live piously, because we have not above a year to live, is it not being more wise, and making ourselves more happy, to live piously, because we may have more years to come ? If one year of piety before we die, is so desirable, are not more years of piety much more desirable ?

15. If a man had five fixed years to live, he could not possibly think at all, without intending to make the best use of them all. When he saw his stay so short in this world, he must needs think that this was not a world for him ; and

when he saw how near he was to another world, that was eternal, he must surely think it necessary to be very diligent in preparing for it.

Now as reasonable as piety appears in such a circumstance of life, it is yet more reasonable in every circumstance of life, to every thinking man.

For who but a madman, can recount that he has five years certain to come?

And if it be reasonable and necessary to deny our worldly tempers, and live wholly unto God, because we are certain that we are to die at the end of five years; surely it must be much more reasonable and necessary, for us to live in the same spirit, because we have no certainty that we shall live five weeks.

16. Again, if we are to add twenty years to the five, which is in all probability more than will be added to the lives of many people, who are at man's estate; what a poor thing it is? how small a difference is there between five, and twenty-five years?

It is said, that a day is with God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day: because in regard to his eternity, this difference is as nothing.

Now as we are created to be eternal, to live an endless succession of ages upon ages, where thousands, and millions of thousands of years will have no proportion to our everlasting life in God; so with regard to this eternal state, which is our real state, twenty-five years is as poor a pittance as twenty-five days.

We can never make any true judgment of time as it relates to us, without considering the true state of our duration. If we are temporary beings, then a little time may justly be called a great deal in relation to us, but if we are eternal beings, then the difference of a few years is as nothing.

17. If we were to suppose three different sorts of rational beings, all of different, but fixed duration, one sort that lived certainly only a month, the other a year, and the third a hundred years.

If these beings were to meet together, and talk about time, they must talk in a very different language; half an hour to those who were to live but a month, must be a very different thing to what it is to those, who are to live a hundred years.

As therefore time is thus a different thing, with regard to the state of those who enjoy it, so if we would know what time is with regard to ourselves, we must consider our state.

Now, since our eternal state is as certainly ours, as our present state; since we are as certainly to live for ever, as we are now to live at all; it is plain, that we cannot judge of the value of any particular time, as to us, but by comparing it to that eternal duration, for which we are created.

If you would know, what five years signify to a being that was to live a hundred, you must compare five to a hundred, and see what proportion it bears to it, and then you will judge right.

So if you would know what twenty years sig-

nify to a son of Adam, you must compare it, not to a million of ages, but to an eternal duration, to which no number of millions bears any proportion: and then you will judge right, by finding it nothing.

18. Consider therefore this; how would you condemn the folly of a man, that should lose his share of future glory, for the sake of being rich, or great, or praised, or delighted in any enjoyment, only one poor day before he was to die!

But if the time will come, when a number of years will seem less to every one, than a day does now; what a condemnation must it then be, if eternal happiness should be lost, for something less than the enjoyment of a day!

Why does a day seem a trifle to us now? It is because we have years to set against it. It is the duration of years that makes it seem as nothing.

What a trifle therefore must the years of a man's age appear, when they are forced to be set against eternity, when there shall be nothing but eternity to compare them with!

And this will be the case of every man, as soon as he is out of the body; he will be forced to forget the distinction of days and years, and to measure time not by the course of the sun, but by setting it against eternity.

As the fixed stars, by reason of our being placed at such distance from them, appear but as so many points; so when we, placed in eternity, shall look back upon all time, it will appear but as a moment.

Then a luxury, an indulgence, a prosperity, a greatness of fifty years, will seem to every one that looks back upon it, as the same poor, short enjoyment, as if he had been snatched away in his first sin.

These few reflections upon time, are only to show how poorly they think, how miserably they judge, who are less careful of an eternal state, because they may be at some years distance from it, than they would be if they knew they were within a few weeks of it.

CHAPTER XII.

Concerning that part of devotion which relates to times and hours of prayer. Of daily early prayer in the morning. How we may improve our forms of prayer, and increase the spirit of devotion.

1. HAVING in the foregoing chapters shown the necessity of a devout spirit, in every part of our common life, in the discharge of all our business, in the use of all the gifts of God: I come now to consider that part of devotion, which relates to times and hours of prayer.

I take it for granted, that every Christian that is in health is up early in the morning, for it is much more reasonable to suppose a person up early, because he is a Christian, than because he is a labourer or a tradesman, or a servant, or has business that wants him.

We naturally conceive some abhorrence of a man that is in bed, when he should be at his

labour, or in his shop. We cannot tell how to think any thing good of him, who is such a slave to drowsiness, as to neglect his business for it.

Let this therefore teach us to conceive, how odious we must appear in the sight of Heaven, if we are in bed, shut up in sleep, when we should be praising God, and are such slaves to drowsiness, as to neglect our devotions for it.

For if he is to be blamed as a slothful drone, that rather chooses the lazy indulgence of sleep, than to perform his proper worldly business ; how much more is he to be reproached, that had rather lie folded up in a bed than be raising up his heart to God, in acts of praise and adoration ?

2. Prayer is the nearest approach to God, and the highest enjoyment of him, that we are capable of in this life.

It is the noblest exercise of the soul, the most exalted use of our best faculties, and the highest imitation of the blessed inhabitants of heaven.

When our hearts are full of God, sending up holy desires to the throne of grace, we are then in our highest state, we are upon the utmost height of human greatness ; we are not before kings and princes, but in the presence of the Lord of all the world, and can be no higher, till death is swallowed up in glory.

3. On the other hand, sleep is the poorest, dullest refreshment of the body, that is so far from being intended as an enjoyment, that we are forced to receive it either in a state of insensibility, or in the folly of dreams.

Sleep is such a dull, stupid state of existence, that even amongst mere animals, we despise them most which are most drowsy.

He therefore that chooses to enlarge the slothful indolence of sleep, rather than be early at his devotions to God, chooses the dullest refreshment of the body, before the highest, noblest enjoyment of the soul ; he chooses that state, which is a reproach to mere animals, rather than that exercise which is the glory of angels.

Besides, he that cannot deny himself this drowsy indulgence, but must pass away good part of the morning in it, is no more prepared for prayer when he is up, than he is prepared for fasting or any other self denial. He may indeed more easily read over a form of prayer, than he can perform those duties ; but he is no more disposed for the true spirit of prayer, than he is disposed for fasting. For sleep thus indulged, gives a softness and idleness to all our tempers, and makes us unable to relish any thing, but what suits with an idle state of mind, and gratifies our natural tempers, as sleep does. So that a person that is a slave to this idleness, is in the same temper when he is up ; and though he is not asleep, yet he is under the effects of it ; and every thing that is idle, indulgent, or sensual, pleases him for the same reason that sleep pleases him : on the other hand, every thing that requires care, trouble, or self denial, is hateful to him, for the same reason that he hates to rise.

4. It is not possible in nature for an epicure to be truly devout ; he must renounce his sen-

suality, before he can relish the happiness of devotion.

Now, he that turns sleep into an idle indulgence, does as much to corrupt his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, as he that turns the necessities of eating into a course of indulgence.

A person that eats and drinks too much, does not feel such effects from it as those do, who live in notorious gluttony and intemperance ; but yet his course of indulgence, though it be not scandalous in the eyes of the world, nor such as torments his own conscience, is a great and constant hinderance to his improvement in virtue ; it gives him eyes that see not ; and ears that hear not ; it creates a sensuality in the soul, increases the power of bodily passions, and makes him capable of entering into the true spirit of religion.

And this is the case of those who waste their time in sleep ; it does not disorder their lives, or wound their consciences, as notorious acts of intemperance do ; but, like any other more moderate course of indulgence, it silently, and by smaller degrees, wears away the spirit of religion, and sinks the soul into a state of dullness and sensuality.

5. If you consider devotion only as a time of so much prayer, you may perhaps perform it, though you live in this daily indulgence ; but if you consider it as a state of the heart, that is deeply affected with a sense of its own misery and infirmities, and desires the Spirit of God more than all things in the world, you will find

the spirit of indulgence, and the spirit of prayer, cannot subsist together. Self denial, of all kinds, is the very life and soul of piety ; but he that has not so small a degree of it, as to be able to be early at his prayers, can have no reason to think that he has taken up his cross, and is following Christ.

What conquest has he got over himself ? What right hand has he cut off ? What trial is he prepared for ? What sacrifice is he ready to offer to God, who cannot be so cruel to himself, as to rise to prayer at such a time as the drudging part of the world are content to rise to their labour ?

6. Some people will not scruple to tell you, that they indulge themselves in sleep, because they have nothing to do ; and that if they had either business or pleasure to rise to, they would not lose so much of their time in sleep. But such people must be told that they mistake the matter ; that they have a great deal of business to do ; they have a hardened heart to change, they have the whole spirit of religion to get. For surely, he that thinks devotion to be of less moment than business or pleasure ; or that he has nothing to do, because nothing but his prayers want him, may be justly said to have the whole spirit of religion to seek.

You must not therefore consider how small a crime it is to rise late ; but you must consider how great a misery it is, to want the spirit of religion ; to have a heart not rightly affected with prayer, and to live in such softness and

idleness, as makes you incapable of the most fundamental duties of a Christian life.

When you read the Scriptures, you see a religion that is all life and spirit, and joy in God · that supposes our souls risen from earthly desires and bodily indulgences, to prepare for another body, another world, and other enjoyments. You see Christians represented as temples of the Holy Ghost, as children of the day, as candidates for an eternal crown, as watchful virgins, that have their lamps always burning in expectation of the bridegroom. But can he be thought to have this joy in God, this care of eternity, this watchful spirit, who has not zeal enough to rise to his prayers ?

7. If I were to desire you not to study the gratification of your palate, in the niceties of meats and drinks, I would not insist upon the crime of wasting your money in such a way, though it be a great one ; but I would desire you to renounce such a way of life, because it supports you in such a state of sensuality and indulgence, as renders you incapable of relishing the most essential doctrines of religion.

For the same reason I do not insist much upon the crime of wasting your time in sleep, though it be a great one ; but I desire you to renounce this indulgence, because it gives a softness and idleness to your soul, and is so contrary to that lively, zealous, watchful, self-denying spirit, which was not only the spirit of Christ and his apostles, and the spirit of all the saints and martyrs which have ever been among

men, but must be the spirit of those who would not sink in the common corruption of the world.

Here therefore we must fix our charge against this practice ; we must blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a general habit, that extends itself through our whole spirit, and supports a state of mind that is wholly wrong.

It is contrary to piety ; not as accidental slips and mistakes in life are contrary to it, but in such a manner, as an ill habit of body is contrary to health.

On the other hand, if you was to rise early every morning, as an instance of self denial, as a method of renouncing indulgence, as a means of redeeming your time and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would find mighty advantages from it. This method, though it seems such a small circumstance, would in all probability be a means of great piety. It would keep it constantly in your heads, that softness and idleness were to be avoided ; that self denial was a part of Christianity. It would teach you to exercise power over yourself, and make you able to renounce other pleasures and tempers that war against the soul.

But above all, what is so planted and watered, will certainly have an increase from God. You will then speak from your heart, your soul will be awake, your prayers will refresh you like meat and drink, you will feel what you say, and begin to know what saints and holy men have meant by fervour in devotion.

8. Hoping therefore that you are now convinced of the necessity of rising early to your prayers, I shall proceed to lay before you a method of daily prayer.

I do not take upon me to prescribe to you the use of any particular forms of prayer, but you will here find some helps, how to furnish yourself with such as may be useful. And if your heart is ready to pray in its own language, I press no necessity of borrowed forms.

For though I think a form of prayer very necessary to public worship, yet if any one can find a better way of raising his heart unto God in private, I have nothing to object against it; my design being only to assist and direct such as stand in need of this assistance.

It seems right for such a one to begin with a form of prayer: and if, in the midst of it he finds his heart ready to break forth into other words, he may leave his form, and follow those fervours of his heart till it again want the assistance of his usual petitions.

This seems to be the true liberty of private devotion: it may be under the direction of some form; yet not so tied down to it, but that it may be free to take such new expressions as its present fervours happen to furnish it with, which sometimes carry the soul more powerfully to God than any expressions that were ever used before.

9. Most people are changeable in regard to devotion. Sometimes our hearts have such strong apprehensions of the Divine presence, are so full

of compunction that we cannot speak in any language but that of tears.

Sometimes the light of God's countenance shines so bright, we see so far into the invisible world, we are so affected with the wonders of the goodness of God, that our hearts worship in a language higher than that of words, and we feel transports of devotion, which only can be felt.

On the other hand, sometimes we are so sunk into our bodies, so dull and unaffected with that which concerns our souls, that we cannot keep pace with our forms of confession, or feel half of that in our hearts, which we have in our mouths: we thank and praise God with forms of words, but our hearts have little or no share in them.

We may provide against this inconstancy of our hearts, by having at hand such forms of prayer, as may best suit us when our hearts are in their best state, and also be most likely to stir them up, when they are sunk into dulness.

10. The first thing you are to do, when you are upon your knees, is, with a short silence, let your soul place itself in the presence of God: use this, or some other method, separate yourself from all common thoughts, and make your heart as sensible as you can of the Divine presence.

Now, if this recollection of spirit is necessary, as who can say it is not? how poorly must they perform their devotions, who are always in a hurry; who begin them in haste, and hardly allow themselves time to repeat their very form

with attention ? Theirs is properly saying prayers, instead of praying.

If you were to use yourself, as far as you can, to pray always in the same place ; if you were to reserve that place for devotion, and not allow yourself to do any thing common in it ; if you were never to be there yourself, but in times of devotion ; if any little room, or, if that cannot be, if any particular part of a room was thus used, this kind of consecration of it, as a place holy unto God, would much assist your devotion.

11. It may be of use to you to observe this further rule : when at any time, either in reading the Scripture, or any book of piety, you meet with a passage, that more than ordinarily affects your mind, turn it into the form of a petition, and give it a place in your prayers.

At all the stated hours of prayer, it may be of benefit to you, to have something fixed, and something at liberty in your devotions.

You may have some fixed subject to be the chief matter of your prayer at that particular time ; and yet have liberty to add such other petitions, as your condition may then require.

For instance : as the morning is to you the beginning of a new life ; as God has then given you a new enjoyment of yourself, and a fresh entrance into the world, it is highly proper that your first devotions should be praise and thanksgiving to God, as for a new creation : and that you should devote body and soul, all you are, and all you have, to his service and glory.

Receive, therefore, every day as a resurrec

tion from death, as a new enjoyment of life : meet every rising sun with such sentiments of God's goodness, as if you had seen it, and all things, new created upon your account ; and under the sense of so great a blessing, let your heart praise and magnify so good and glorious a Creator.

Therefore praise and thanksgiving, and oblation of yourself to God, may be the fixed subject of your first prayers in the morning ; and then take the liberty of adding such other devotions, as the accidental difference of your state, or the accidental difference of your heart, shall direct.

12. One of the greatest benefits of private devotion consists in adapting our prayers to the difference of our state and the difference of our hearts.

By the difference of our state, is meant the difference of our external state, as of sickness, health, pains, losses, disappointments, troubles, particular mercies, or judgments from God, and all sorts of kindnesses, injuries or reproaches from other people.

Now, as these are great parts of our state of life, as they make great difference in it, by continually changing : so our devotion will be made doubly beneficial to us, when it watches to receive and sanctify all these changes of our state, and turns them all into so many occasions of a more particular application to God, of such thanksgiving, such resignation, such petitions, as our present state more especially requires.

And he that makes every change in his state,

a reason of presenting unto God, some particular petitions suitable to that change, will soon find, that he has taken an excellent means, not only of praying with fervour, but of living as he prays.

13. We are likewise always to adapt some part of our prayers to the different tempers of our hearts, as of love, joy, peace, tranquillity, dulness and dryness of spirit, anxiety, discontent, motions of envy and ambition, dark and disconsolate thoughts, resentments, fretfulness and peevish tempers.

If we are in the delightful calm of sweet and easy passions, of love and joy in God, we should then offer the tribute of thanksgiving.

If, on the other hand, we feel ourselves laden with heavy passions, with dulness of spirit, anxiety and uneasiness, we must then look up to God in acts of humility, confessing our unworthiness, opening our troubles to him, beseeching him in his good time to lessen our infirmities, and to deliver us from these passions.

By this wise application of our prayers, we shall get all the relief from them that is possible; and the very changeableness of our hearts, will prove a means of exercising a greater variety of holy tempers.

You will perceive by this, that persons ought to have a great share in composing their own devotions.

As to that part of their prayers, which is always fixed, they may use forms composed by other persons; but in that part, which they are to suit to the present state of their life, and the

present state of their heart, they must let the sense of their own condition help them to such kinds of petition, thanksgiving, or resignation, as their present state requires.

14. But it is amazing to see how eagerly men employ their parts, their study, application, and exercise: how all helps are called to their assistance, when any thing is intended in worldly matters; and how little they use their parts, sagacity and abilities, to raise and increase their devotion.

Mundanus is a man of excellent parts, and clear apprehension. He is well advanced in age, and has made a great figure in his business. Every part of trade that has fallen in his way, has had some improvement from him; and he is always contriving to carry every method of doing any thing well to its greatest height. Mundanus aims at the greatest perfection in every thing. The strength of his mind, and his just way of thinking, make him intent upon removing all imperfections.

He can tell you all the defects and errors in all the common methods, whether of trade, building, or improving land or manufactures. The clearness and strength of his understanding, which he is constantly improving, by continual exercise in these matters, by often digesting his thoughts in writing, and trying every thing every way, has rendered him a great master in most concerns in human life.

Thus has Mundanus gone on, increasing his knowledge and judgment, as fast as his years came upon him.

The one thing which has not fallen under his improvement, nor received any benefit from his judicious mind, is his devotion : this is just in the same poor state it was, when he was only six years of age ; and the old man prays now in that little form of words which his mother used to hear him repeat night and morning.

This Mundanus, that hardly ever saw the poorest utensil, or ever took the meanest trifle into his hand, without considering how it might be made or used to better advantage, has gone all his life long praying in the same manner as when he was a child ; without ever considering how much better or oftener he might pray.

If Mundanus sees a book of devotion, he passes it by, as he does a spelling book ; because he remembers that he learned to pray so many years ago under his mother when he learned to spell.

Now, how poor and pitiable is the conduct of this man of sense, who has so much judgment in every thing, but that which is the whole wisdom of man.

And how miserably do many people, more or less, imitate this conduct ?

15. *Classicus* is a man of learning, and well versed in all the best authors of antiquity. He has read them so much, that he has entered into their spirit, and can imitate the manner of any of them. All their thoughts are his thoughts, and he can express himself in their language. He is so great a friend to this improvement of the mind, that if he lights on a young scholar, he never fails to advise him concerning his studies.

Classicus tells his young man, he must not think that he has done enough, when he has only learned languages ; but that he must be daily conversant with the best authors, read them again and again, catch their spirit by living with them ; and that there is no other way of becoming like them, or of making himself a man of taste and judgment.

How wise might Classicus have been, if he had but thought as justly of devotion, as he does of learning ?

He never indeed says any thing shocking or offensive about devotion, because he never thinks or talks about it. It suffers nothing from him, but neglect and disregard.

The two Testaments would not have had so much as a place amongst his books, but that they are both to be had in Greek.

16. Classicus thinks he sufficiently shows his regard for the Holy Scripture, when he tells you, that he has no other books of piety besides them.

It is very well, Classicus, that you prefer the Bible to all other books of piety ; he has no judgment, that is not thus far of your opinion.

But if you will have no other book of piety besides the Bible, because it is the best, how comes it, Classicus, that you do not content yourself with one of the best books among the Greeks and Romans ? How comes it that you are so eager after all of them ? How comes it that you think the knowledge of one is a necessary help to the knowledge of the other ? How

comes it that you are so earnest, so laborious, so expensive of your time and money, to restore broken periods, and scraps of the ancients ?

How comes it that you tell your young scholar, he must not content himself with barely understanding his authors, but must be continually reading them all, as the only means of entering into their spirit, and forming his own judgment according to them ?

Why then must the Bible lie alone in your study ? Is not the spirit of the saints, the piety of the holy followers of Jesus Christ, as good and necessary a means of entering into the spirit and taste of the gospel, as the reading of the ancients is of entering into the spirit of antiquity ?

Is your young poet to search after every line that may give new wings to his fancy, or direct his imagination ? And is it not as reasonable for him who desires to improve in the divine life, to search after every strain of devotion, that may move, kindle, and inflame the holy ardour of his soul ?

Do you advise your orator to translate the best orations, to commit much of them to memory, to be frequently exercising his talent in this manner, that habits of thinking and speaking justly may be formed in his mind ? and is there not the same advantage to be made by books of devotion ? Should not a man use them in the same way, that habits of devotion, and aspiring to God in holy thoughts, may be well formed in his soul ?

Now the reason why *Classicus* does not think

and judge thus reasonably of devotion, is owing to his never thinking of it in any other manner, than as the repeating a form of words. It never in his life entered into his head, to think of devotion as a state of the heart, as a temper that is to grow and increase like our reason and judgment, and to be formed in us by such a diligent use of proper means, as are necessary to form any other wise habit of mind.

And it is for want of this, that he has been content all his life, with the bare letter of prayer, and eagerly bent upon entering into the spirit of heathen poets and orators.

And it is much to be lamented, that numbers of scholars are more or less chargeable with this excessive folly ; so negligent of improving their devotion, and so desirous of other poor accomplishments, as if they thought it a nobler talent, to be able to write an epigram in the turn of Martial, than to live, and think, and pray to God, in the spirit of St. Austin.

And yet if you were to ask Mundanus, and Classicus, or any man of business or learning, whether piety is not the highest perfection of man, or devotion the greatest attainment in the world, they must both be forced to answer in the affirmative, or else give up the truth of the gospel.

17. Devotion is nothing else, but right apprehensions and right affections toward God.

All practices therefore that improve our true apprehensions of God, all ways of life that tend to nourish, raise, and fix our affections upon him,

are to be reckoned so many helps and means of devotion.

As prayer is the proper fuel of this holy flame, so we must use all our care to give prayer its full power ; as by alms, self denial, frequent retirements, and holy readings, composing forms for ourselves, or using the best we can get, adding length of time, and observing hours of prayer ; changing, improving and suiting our devotions to the condition of our lives, and the state of our hearts.

Those who have most leisure, seem more especially called to a more eminent observance of this ; and they who by the necessity of their state, have but little time to employ thus, must make the best use of that little they have.

18. There is one thing more I would advise ; and that is, to begin your prayers with a psalm.

I do not mean that you should read over a psalm ; but that you should chant or sing one.

The difference between singing and reading a psalm, will be easily understood, if you consider the difference between reading and singing a common song that you like. Whilst you only read it you only like it ; but as soon as you sing it, you feel the same spirit within you, that there seems to be in the words.

You will perhaps say, you cannot sing. This objection might be of weight, if you were desired to sing to entertain other people ; but it is not to be admitted in the present case, where you are only advised to sing the praises of God in private.

Do but live so that your heart may truly rejoice in God, that it may feel itself affected with the praises of God; and then you will find that this state of your heart will neither want a voice, nor ear, to find a tune for a psalm.

19. The union of soul and body, is not a mixture of their substances, as we see bodies united and mixed together, but consists solely in the mutual power that they have of acting upon one another.

If two persons were in such a state of dependence upon one another, that neither of them could act, or move, or think, or feel, or suffer, or desire any thing, without putting the other into the same condition, one might properly say, that they were in a state of strict union, although their substances were not united together.

Now this is the union of the soul and body; the substance of the one cannot be mixed or united with the other; but they are held together in such a state of union, that all the actions and sufferings of the one, are at the same time the actions and sufferings of the other. The soul has no thought or passion, but the body is concerned in it; the body has no action or motion, but what in some degree, affects the soul.

Now, as it is the sole will of God, that is the cause of all the powers and effects which you see in the world; as the sun gives light and heat, not because it has any natural power of so doing; as it is fixed in a certain place, and other bodies moving about it; not because it is in the nature of the sun to stand still, and in the

nature of other bodies to move about it; but merely because it is the will of God, that they should be in such a state. As the eye is the organ, or instrument of seeing, not because the skins, and coats, and humours of the eye, have a natural power of giving sight: as the ears are the organs, or instruments of hearing, not because the make of the ear has any natural power over sounds, but merely because it is the will of God, that seeing and hearing should be thus received: so it is the sole will of God, that is the cause of this union betwixt the soul and the body.

20. Now if you rightly apprehend this short account of the union of the soul and body, you will see a great deal into the reason of all the outward parts of religion.

This union of our souls and bodies, is the reason both why we have so little and so much power over ourselves. It is owing to this, that we have so little power over our souls; for as we cannot prevent the effects of external objects upon our bodies, as we cannot command outward causes; so we cannot always command the inward state of our minds: because, as outward objects act upon our bodies without our leave, so our bodies act upon our minds by the laws of the vital union. And thus you see it is owing to this union, that we have so little power over ourselves.

On the other hand, it is owing to this union, that we have so much power over ourselves. For as our souls in a great measure depend upon our

bodies : and as we have great power over these ; as we can mortify our bodies, and remove ourselves from objects that inflame our passions ; so we have a great power over the inward state of our souls. Again, as the outward acts of reading, praying, singing, and the like, have an effect upon the soul ; so by being masters of these outward, bodily actions, we have great power over the inward state of the heart.

And thus it is owing to this union, that we have so much power over ourselves.

Now from this you may see the benefit of singing psalms, and of all the outward acts of religion ; for if the body has so much power over the soul, all such bodily actions as affect the soul, are of great weight in religion, because they are proper to support that spirit, which is the true worship of God.

21. This doctrine may be easily carried too far ; for by calling in too many outward means of worship, it may degenerate into superstition. But some have fallen into the contrary extreme. Because religion is justly placed in the heart, they renounce vocal prayer and other outward acts of worship, and resolve all religion into a quietism, or mystic intercourse with God in silence.

But since we are neither all soul nor all body : seeing none of our actions are either separately of the soul, or separately of the body ; if we would truly prostrate ourselves before God, we must use our bodies to postures of lowliness ; if we desire true fervours of devotion, we must

make prayer the frequent labour of our lips ; if we would feel inward joy and delight in God we must practise all the outward acts of it, and make our voices call upon our hearts.

Now, therefore, you may plainly see the reason of singing psalms ; it is because outward actions are necessary to support inward temper.

22. I have been the longer upon this head, because of its importance to true religion. For there is no state of mind so excellent as that of thankfulness to God ; and consequently, nothing is of more importance than that which exercises and improves this habit of mind.

An uneasy, complaining spirit, which is sometimes the spirit of those that seem careful of religion, is yet of all tempers the most contrary to religion : for it disowns that God which it pretends to adore. For he sufficiently disowns God who does not adore him as a Being of infinite goodness.

If a man does not believe that all the world is as God's family, where nothing happens by chance, but all is guided and directed by the care and providence of a Being that is all love and goodness to all his creatures ; if a man does not believe this from his heart, he cannot be said to believe in God. And yet he that has this faith, has faith enough to be always thankful to God. For he that believes that every thing happens to him for the best, cannot complain for the want of something that is better.

If, therefore, you live in murmurings and complaints, it is not because you are a weak

infirm creature, but it is because you want the first principle of religion, a right belief in God. For as thankfulness is an express acknowledgment of the goodness of God towards you ; so repinings and complaints are as plain accusations of God's want of goodness toward you.

On the other hand, would you know who is the greatest saint in the world ? It is not he who prays most, or fasts most ; it is not he who gives most alms, or is most eminent for temperance, chastity, or justice ; but it is he who is always thankful to God, who wills every thing that God willeth, who receives every thing as an instance of God's goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it.

All prayer and devotion, fastings and repentance, meditation and retirement, all sacraments and ordinances, are but so many means to render the soul thus conformable to the will of God, and to fill it with thankfulness and praise for every thing that comes from God. This is the perfection of all virtues ; and all virtues that do not tend to it, or proceed from it, are but so many false ornaments of a soul not converted unto God.

23. If any would tell you the shortest surest way to all happiness, he must tell you to thank and praise God for every thing that happens to you.—For whatever seeming calamity happens, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing. Could you therefore work miracles, you could not do more for yourself, than by this thankful spirit ; for it heals with a word

speaking, and turns all that it touches into happiness.

If, therefore, you would be so true to your interest, as to propose this thankfulness as the end of all your religion ; if you would but settle it in your mind, that this was the state that you was to aim at by all your devotions, you would then have something plain and visible to walk by, and might judge of your improvement in piety. For so far as you renounce all motions of your own will, and seek for no other happiness but in the thankful reception of every thing that happens to you, so far you have advanced in piety.

And although this be the highest temper that you can aim at ; yet it is not tied to any time or place, or great occasion, but is always in your power, and may be the exercise of every day. For the common events of every day are sufficient to discover and exercise this temper, and may plainly show you how far you are governed in all your actions by this thankful spirit.

24. It may perhaps be objected, that though the benefit of this practice is apparent ; yet it seems not so fit for private devotions, since it can hardly be performed without making our devotions public.

It is answered, First, That great numbers of people have it in their power to be as private as they please ; such persons, therefore, are excluded from this excuse.

Secondly, Numbers of people are, by the necessity of their state, as servants, apprentices,

prisoners, and families in small houses, forced to be continually in the presence of somebody or other.

Now are such persons to neglect their prayers, because they cannot pray without being seen? Are they not rather obliged to be more exact in them, that others may not be witnesses of their neglect, and so corrupted by their example?

And what is here said of devotion, may surely be said of singing a psalm.

The rule is this: Do not pray that you may be seen of men; but if your confinement obliges you to be always in the sight of others, be more afraid of being seen to neglect, than of being seen to have recourse to prayer.

Thirdly, either people can use such privacy in this practice as to have no hearers, or they cannot. If they can, then this objection vanishes as to them; and if they cannot, they should consider their confinement, and the necessities of their state, as the confinement of a prison; and they have an excellent pattern to follow; they may imitate St. Paul and Silas, who "sang praises to God in prison," though we are expressly told, that the prisoners heard them. They did not refrain this kind of devotion for fear of being heard by others. If, therefore, any one is in the same necessity, either in prison or out of prison, what can he do better than to follow this example?

Fourthly, The privacy of our prayers is not destroyed by our having, but by our seeking witnesses of them.

If, therefore, nobody hears you but those you cannot separate yourself from, you are as much in secret, and "your Father who seeth in secret" will as truly reward your secrecy, as if you were seen by him alone.

CHAPTER XIII.

Recommending devotions at nine o'clock in the morning, called in Scripture the third hour of the day. The subject of these prayers may be humility.

1. I AM now come to another hour of prayer, which in Scripture is called the third hour of the day; but according to our way of numbering the hours, it is called the ninth hour of the morning.

If the practice of the saints in all ages, if the customs of the pious Jews and primitive Christians be of any force with us, we have authority enough to persuade us to make this hour a constant season of devotion.

2. I have in the last chapter laid before you the excellency of praise and thanksgiving, and recommended that as the subject of your first devotions in the morning.

And because humility is the life and soul of piety, the ground and security of all holy affections, this may be the subject of your devotions at this hour.

This virtue is so essential to the right state of our souls, that there is no pretending to a rea-

sonable or pious life without it. We may as well think to see without eyes, or live without breath, as to live in the spirit of religion without the spirit of humility.

But although it is the soul and essence of all religious duties, yet is it, generally speaking, the least understood, the least regarded, the least intended, the least desired and sought after of all virtues.

No people have more occasion to be afraid of the approaches of pride, than those who have made some advances in a pious life. For pride can grow as well upon our virtues as our vices, and steal upon us on all occasions.

Every good thought we have, every good action we do, lays us open to pride.

It is not only the beauty of our persons, the gifts of fortune, our natural talents, and the distinctions of life; but even our devotions and alms, our fastings and humiliations, expose us to fresh temptations of this spirit.

And it is for this reason that I so earnestly advise every devout person to the exercise of humility, that he may not fall a sacrifice to his own progress in those virtues, which are to save mankind from destruction.

As all virtue is founded in truth; so humility is a true sense of our weakness, misery, and sin.

The weakness of our state appears from our inability to do any thing of ourselves. In our natural state we are entirely without any power; we are indeed active beings, but can only act by a power that is every moment lent us from God.

We have no more power of our own to move a hand or stir a foot, than to move the sun or stop the clouds.

When we speak a word, we feel no more power in ourselves to do it, than we feel ourselves able to raise the dead. For we act no more within our own power, or by our own strength, when we speak a word or make a sound, than the apostles acted within their own power, or by their own strength, when a word from their mouth cast out devils, and cured diseases.

As it was solely the power of God that enabled them to speak to such purposes, so it is solely the power of God that enables us to speak at all.

This is the dependent, helpless poverty of our state; which is a great reason for humility. For since we neither are, nor can do, any thing of ourselves; to be proud of any thing that we are, or of any thing that we can do, and to ascribe glory to ourselves for these things, has the guilt both of stealing and lying. It has the guilt of stealing, as it gives to ourselves those things which belong only to God. It has the guilt of lying, as it is denying the truth of our state, and pretending to be something that we are not.

3. The misery of our condition appears in this, that we use these borrowed powers of our nature, to the torment and vexation of ourselves and our fellow-creatures.

God has entrusted us with reason, and we use

it to the disorder and corruption of our nature. We reason ourselves into all kinds of folly and misery, and make our lives the sport of foolish and extravagant passions; seeking after imaginary happiness of all kinds, creating to ourselves a thousand wants, amusing our hearts with false hopes and fears, using the world worse than irrational animals, envying, vexing, and tormenting one another with restless passions, and unreasonable contentions.

Let any man but look back upon his own life, and see what use he has made of his reason. What foolish passions, what vain thoughts, what needless labours, what extravagant projects, have taken up the greatest part of his life. How foolish he has been in his words and conversation; how seldom he has been able to please himself, and how often he has displeased others; how often he has changed his counsels, hated what he loved, and loved what he hated; how often he has been enraged and transported at trifles, pleased and displeased with the very same things, and constantly changing from one vanity to another. Let a man but take this view of his own life, and he will see cause enough to confess that pride was not made for man.

Let him but consider, that if the world knew all that of him, which he knows of himself; if they saw what vanity and passions govern his inside, and what secret tempers sully and corrupt his best actions, he would have no more pretence to be honoured and admired for his

goodness and wisdom, than a rotten and distempered body to be loved and admired for its health and comeliness.

4. This is so true, and so known to the hearts of almost all people, that nothing would appear more dreadful to them, than to have their hearts thus fully discovered to the eyes of all beholders.

And perhaps there are very few people in the world, who would not rather choose to die, than to have all their secret follies, the vanity of their minds, the frequency of their vain and disorderly passions, their uneasiness, hatreds, envies, and vexations, made known unto the world.

And shall pride be entertained in a heart thus conscious of its own miserable behaviour ?

Shall a creature in such a condition, that he could not support himself under the shame of being known to the world in his real state ; shall such a creature, because his shame is only known to God, to holy angels, and his own conscience ; shall he, in the sight of God and holy angels, dare to be vain and proud of himself ?

5. If to this we add the shame and guilt of sin, we shall find still a greater reason for humility.

No creature that had lived in innocence, would have thereby got any pretence for pride ; because as a creature, all that it is, or has, or does, is from God, and therefore the honour of all that belongs to it, is only due to God.

But if a creature that is a sinner, deserving nothing but pains and punishments for the shameful abuse of his powers ; if such a crea-

ture pretends to glory for any thing that he is, or does, he can only be said to glory in his shame.

Now, how monstrous and shameful the nature of sin is, is sufficiently apparent from that great atonement that is necessary to cleanse us from the guilt of it.

Nothing less has been required to take away the guilt of our sins, than the sufferings and death of the Son of God. Had he not taken our nature upon him, our nature had been for ever separated from God, and incapable of ever appearing before him.

And is there any room for pride, whilst we are partakers of such a nature as this?

Have our sins rendered us so abominable to him that made us, that he could not so much as receive our prayers, or admit our repentance, till the Son of God made himself man, and became a suffering advocate for our whole race; and can we, in this state, pretend to high thoughts of ourselves? Shall we presume to take delight in our own worth, who are not worthy so much as to ask pardon for our sins, without the mediation and intercession of the Son of God?

Thus deep is the foundation of humility laid, in these deplorable circumstances of our condition; which show, that it is as great an offence against truth for a man to lay claim to any degrees of glory, as to pretend to the honour of creating himself. If man will boast of any thing as his own, he must boast of his misery and sin; for there is nothing else but this, that is his own property.

6. Turn your eyes toward heaven, and fancy that you saw what is doing there ; that you saw cherubim and seraphim, and all the glorious inhabitants of that place, all united in one work ; not seeking glory from one another, not labouring for their own advancement, not contemplating their own perfections, not singing their own praises, not valuing themselves, and despising others, but all employed in one and the same work, all happy in one and the same joy ; “ casting down their crowns before the throne of God, giving glory, and honour, and power to him alone.” Rev. iv, 10, 11.

Then turn your eyes to the fallen world, and consider how unreasonable and odious it must be, for such poor worms, such miserable sinners, to take delight in their ~~ew~~ fancied glories, whilst the highest and most glorious sons of heaven seek for no other greatness and honour, but that of ascribing all honour, and greatness, and glory to God alone ?

Pride is only the disorder of the fallen world ; it has no place amongst other beings ; it can only subsist where ignorance and sensuality, lies and falsehood, lusts and impurity reign.

Let a man, when he is most delighted with his own figure, contemplate our blessed Lord stretched out, and nailed upon a cross ; and then let him consider how absurd it must be, for a heart full of pride and vanity to pray to God, through the sufferings of a crucified Saviour.

These are the reflections you are often to meditate upon, that you may walk before God

in such a spirit of humility as becomes the weak, miserable, and sinful state of all that are descended from fallen Adam.

7. But you must not content yourself with this, as if you was therefore humble, because you acknowledged the reasonableness of humility, and declare against pride.

You would not imagine yourself to be devout, because in your judgment you approved of prayers, and often declared your mind in favour of devotion. Yet how many people imagine themselves humble enough, for no other reason, but because they often commend humility, and make vehement declarations against pride ?

Cæcus is a rich man, of good birth, and very fine parts ; is very full of every thing that he says or does, and never imagines it possible for such a judgment as his to be mistaken. He can bear no contradiction, and discovers the weakness of your understanding, as soon as ever you oppose him. Cæcus would have been very religious, but that he always thought he was so.

There is nothing so odious to Cæcus as a proud man ; and the misfortune is, that in this he is so very quick-sighted, that he discovers in almost every body, some strokes of vanity.

On the other hand, he is exceeding fond of humble and modest persons. Humility, says he, is so amiable a quality, that it forces our esteem wherever we meet with it. There is no possibility of despising the meanest person that has it, or of esteeming the greatest man that wants it.

Cæcus no more suspects himself to be proud,

than he suspects his want of sense. And the reason of it is because he always finds himself so in love with humility, and so enraged at pride.

It is very true, Cæcus, you speak sincerely, when you say you love humility, and abhor pride. You are no hypocrite; you speak the true sentiments of your mind; but then take this along with you; you only love humility, and hate pride in other people. You never once in your life thought of any other humility, or of any other pride, than that which you have seen in other people.

8. The case of Cæcus is a common case; many people live in all the instances of pride, and yet never suspect themselves, because they dislike proud people, and are pleased with humility and modesty, wherever they find them.

All their speeches in favour of humility, and all their railings against pride, are looked upon as effects of their own humble spirit.

Whereas in truth, these are so far from being proofs of humility, that they are great arguments of the want of it.

For the fuller of pride any one is himself, the more impatient will he be at the smallest instances of it in other people. And the less humility any one has in his own mind, the more will he demand it in other people.

You must therefore act by a quite contrary measure, and reckon yourself only so far humble, as you impose every instance of humility upon yourself, and never call for it in other

people. So far an enemy to pride, as you never spare it in yourself, nor ever censure it in other persons.

The loving humility is of no benefit to you, but so far as all your own thoughts, words, and actions are governed by it. And the hating of pride does you no good, but so far as you hate to harbour any degree of it in your heart.

Now in order to set out in the practice of humility, you must take it for granted that you are proud, that you have been so all your life.

You should believe also that it is your greatest weakness, that your heart is most subject to it, that it is so constantly stealing upon you, you have reason to suspect its approaches in all your actions.

For there is no one vice that is more deeply rooted in our nature, or that receives such constant nourishment from almost every thing that we think or do. There being hardly any thing in the world, that we want or use, or any action or duty of life, but pride finds some means or other to take hold of it. So that at what time soever we begin to offer ourselves to God, we can hardly be surer of any thing, than that we have a great deal of pride to repent of.

If therefore you find it disagreeable to entertain this opinion of yourself, and that you cannot put yourself amongst those that want to be cured of pride, you may be as sure, as if an angel from heaven had told you, that you have not only much, but all your humility to seek.

For you can have no greater sign of a con-

firmed pride, than when you think that you are humble enough. He that thinks he loves God enough, shows himself to be an entire stranger to that holy passion ; so he that thinks he has humility enough, shows that he is not so much as a beginner in the practice of true humility.

9. Every person therefore, when he first applies himself to the exercise of humility, must consider himself as a learner, who is to learn something that is contrary to all his former tempers and habits of mind.

He has not only much to learn, but he has also a great deal to unlearn ; he is to forget and lay aside his own spirit, which has been a long while fixing and forming itself ; he must forget, and depart from abundance of passions and opinions, which the fashion and vogue, and spirit of the world, have made natural to him.

He must lay aside the opinions and passions which he has received from the world, because the vogue and fashion of the world, by which we have been carried away as in a torrent, before we could pass right judgments of the value of things, is utterly contrary to humility.

The devil is called in Scripture, the prince of this world, because he has great power in it, because many of its rules and principles are invented by this evil spirit to separate us from God, and prevent our return to happiness.

Now according to the spirit of this world, whose corrupt air we have all breathed, there are many things that pass for great, and honourable, and desirable, which yet are so far from

being so, that the true greatness and honour of our nature consists in the not desiring them.

To abound in wealth, to have fine houses, and rich clothes, to be attended with splendour and equipage, to be beautiful in our persons, to have titles of dignity, to be above our fellow creatures, to command the bows and obeisance of other people, to be looked on with admiration, to subdue all that oppose us, to set out ourselves in as much splendour as we can, to live highly and magnificently, to eat and drink, and delight ourselves in the most costly manner, these are the great, the honourable, the desirable things, to which the spirit of the world turns the eyes of all people. And many a man is afraid of not engaging in the pursuit of these things, lest the world should take him for a fool.

10. The history of the gospel, is chiefly the history of Christ's conquest over the spirit of the world. And the number of true Christians, is only the number of those, who following the spirit of Christ, have lived contrary to this spirit of the world.

“If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Again, Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world. Set your affections on things above, and not on things of the earth ; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” This is the language of the whole New Testament. This is the mark of Christianity ; you are to be dead, that is, dead to the spirit and temper of the world, and live a new life in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

But notwithstanding the plainness of these doctrines, most Christians live and die slaves to the customs and tempers of the world.

How many people swell with pride and vanity, for such things as they would not value at all, but that they are admired in the world?

Would a man take ten years more drudgery in business to add two horses more to his coach, but that he knows that the world admires a coach and six? How fearful are many people of having their houses poorly furnished, or themselves meanly clothed, for this only reason, lest the world should place them amongst low and mean people?

Many a man would drop a resentment, and forgive an affront, but that he is afraid if he should, the world would not forgive him.

How many would practise Christian temperance and sobriety, were it not for the censure which the world passes upon such a life?

Others have frequent intentions of living up to the rules of Christian perfection, but they are frightened by considering what the world would say of them.

11. Thus they dare not attempt to be eminent in the sight of God, for fear of being little in the eyes of the world.

From this quarter arises the greatest difficulty of humility, because it cannot subsist in any mind, but so far as it is dead to the world.

You can make no stand against the assaults of pride, humility can have no place in your soul, till you stop the power of the world over

you, and resolve against a blind obedience to its laws.

For indeed as great as the power of the world is, it is all built upon a blind obedience.

Ask whom you will, learned or unlearned, every one seems to know and confess, that the general temper and spirit of the world, is nothing else but humour, folly, and extravagance.

Who will not own that the wisdom of philosophy, the piety of religion, was always confined to a small number ? And is not this expressly owning that the common spirit and temper of the world, is neither according to the wisdom of philosophy, nor the piety of religion ?

Therefore you should not think it a hard saying, that in order to be humble, you must withdraw your obedience from that vulgar spirit, which gives laws to fops and coquettes, and form your judgments according to the wisdom of philosophy, and the piety of religion.

12. Again, To lessen your regard to the opinion of the world, think how soon the world will disregard you, and have no more thought or concern about you, than about the poorest animal that died in a ditch.

Your friends, if they can, may bury you with some distinction, and set up a monument to let posterity see that your dust lies under such a stone ; and when that is done, all is done. Your place is filled up by another, the world is just in the same state it was, you are blotted out of its sight, and as much forgotten by the world, as if you had never belonged to it.

• Think upon the rich, the great, and the learned persons, that have made great figures, and been high in the esteem of the world ; many of them died in your time, and yet they are sunk, and lost, and gone, and as much disregarded by the world, as if they had been only so many bubbles of water.

Think again, how many poor souls see heaven lost, and lie now expecting a miserable eternity, for their homage to a world, that thinks itself every whit as well without them, and is just as merry as it was, when they were in it.

Is it therefore worth your while to lose the smallest degree of virtue, for the sake of pleasing so bad a master, and so false a friend, as the world is ?

Is it worth your while to bow the knee to such an idol as this, that so soon will have neither eyes, nor ears, nor a heart to regard you, instead of serving that great, and holy, and mighty God, that will make all his servants partakers of his own eternity ?

Will you let the fear of a false world, that has no love for you, keep you from the fear of that God who has only created you that he may love and bless you to all eternity ?

13. Consider our blessed Lord's words ; "They are not of this world, as I am not of this world."—This is the state of Christianity with regard to this world. If you are not thus out of, and contrary to the world, you want the distinguishing mark of Christianity : you do not

belong to Christ, but by being out of the world, as he was out of it.

We may deceive ourselves, if we please, with softening comments upon these words, but they are, and will be understood in their first simplicity and plainness, by every one that reads them in the same spirit that our blessed Lord spoke them.--And to understand them in any lower meaning, is to let carnal wisdom explain away that doctrine, by which itself was to be destroyed.

Christianity has placed us out of, and above the world ; and we fall from our calling, as soon as we fall into the tempers of the world.

Now as it was the spirit of the world that nailed our blessed Lord to the cross ; so every man that has the spirit of Christ, that opposes the world as he did, will certainly be crucified by the world some way or other.

For Christianity still lives in the same world that Christ did ; and these two will be utter enemies, till the kingdom of darkness is entirely at an end.

Had you lived with our Saviour as his true disciple, you had then been hated as he was ; and if you now live in his spirit, the world will be the same enemy to you now, that it was to him then.

14. "If ye were of the world," saith our blessed Lord, "the world would love its own ; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you," John xv, 19.

We are apt to lose the true meaning of these

words, by considering them only as an historical description of something that was the state of our Saviour and his disciples at that time. But this is reading the Scripture as a dead letter ; for they exactly describe the state of true Christians at this, and all other times, to the end of the world.

For as true Christianity is nothing else but the spirit of Christ ; so whether that spirit appear in the person of Christ himself, or his apostles, or followers in any age, it is the same thing ; whoever hath his spirit, will be hated, despised, and condemned by the world as he was.

For the world will always love its own, and none but its own ; this is as certain and unchangeable, as the contrariety betwixt light and darkness.

15. You will perhaps say, that the world is now become Christian, at least that part of it where we live ; and therefore the world is not now to be considered in that state of opposition to Christianity, as when it was heathen.

It is granted, the world now professeth Christianity. But will any one say, that this Christian world is of the spirit of Christ ? Are its general tempers the tempers of Christ ? Are the passions of sensuality, self love, pride, covetousness, ambition, and vain glory, less contrary to the spirit of the gospel, now they are among Christians, than when they were among heathens ? Or, will you say, that the tempers and passions of the heathen world are lost and gone ?

16. And indeed the world, by professing

Christianity, is so far from being a less dangerous enemy than it was before, that it has by its favours destroyed more Christians than ever it did by the most violent persecution.

We must therefore be so far from considering the world as in a state of less enmity and opposition to Christianity, than it was in the first times of the gospel, that we must guard against it as a greater and more dangerous enemy now, than it was in those times.

It is a greater enemy, because it has greater power over Christians, by its favours, riches, honours, rewards, and protections, than it had by the fire and fury of its persecutions.

It is a more dangerous enemy, by having lost its appearance of enmity. Its outward profession of Christianity makes it no longer considered as an enemy ; and therefore the generality of people are easily persuaded to resign themselves up to be governed and directed by it.

How many consciences are kept at quiet, upon no other foundation, but because they sin under the authority of the Christian world ?

How many directions of the gospel lie by unregarded ? And how unconcernedly do particular persons read them, for no other reason, but because they seem unregarded by the Christian world ?

How many compliances do people make to the Christian world, without any hesitation, or remorse ? which if they had been required of them only by heathens, would have been refused, as contrary to the holiness of Christianity !

Who could be content with seeing how contrary his life is to the gospel, but because he sees that he lives as the Christian world doth ?

17. There is nothing therefore that a Christian ought more constantly to guard against, than the authority of the Christian world.

And all the passages of Scripture, which represent the world as contrary to Christianity, which require our separation from it, as from a monster of iniquity, are to be taken in the strict sense, in relation to the present world.

For the change that the world has undergone has only altered its methods, but not lessened its power of destroying religion.

Whilst pride, sensuality, covetousness, and ambition, had only the authority of the heathen world, Christians were thereby made more intent upon the contrary virtues. But when pride, sensuality, covetousness, and ambition, have the authority of the Christian world ; then private Christians are in the utmost danger, not only of being shamed out of the practice, but of losing the very notion of the piety of the gospel.

There is therefore hardly any possibility of saving yourself from the present world but by considering it as the same enemy to all true holiness, as it is represented in the Scriptures ; and by assuring yourself that it is as dangerous to conform to its tempers and passions, now it is Christian, as when it was heathen.

Need a man do more to make his soul unfit for the mercy of God than by being greedy and ambitious of honour ? yet how can you renounce

this temper without renouncing the spirit and temper of the world, in which you now live ?

How can a man be made more incapable of the spirit of Christ, than by a wrong value for money ; and yet how can he be more wrong in his value of it, than by following the authority of the Christian world ?

Nay, in every order and station of life, whether of learning or business, either in church or state, you cannot act up to the spirit of religion, without renouncing the most general temper and behaviour of those who are of the same order and business as yourself.

And though human prudence seems to talk mighty wisely about the necessity of avoiding particularities, yet he that dares not be so weak as to be particular, will be obliged to avoid the most substantial duties of Christian piety.

These reflections will, I hope, help you to break through those difficulties, and resist those temptations, which the authority and fashion of the world have raised against the practice of Christian humility.

CHAPTER XIV.

Showing how the education which men generally receive, makes the doctrines of humility difficult to be practised. The spirit of a better education represented in the character of Paternus.

1. ANOTHER difficulty in the practice of humility, arises from our education. We are cor-

ruptly educated, and then committed to take our course in a corrupt world: so that it is no wonder if examples of great piety are so seldom seen.

Great part of the world are undone by being born and bred in families that have no religion.

But this is not the thing I now mean; the education that I here intend, is such as children generally receive from virtuous parents, and learned tutors and governors.

Had we continued perfect, as God created the first man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a sufficient self instruction for every one. But as sickness and diseases have created the necessity of medicines and physicians, so the disorder of our rational nature has introduced the necessity of education and tutors.

And as the only end of the physician is to restore nature to its own state; so the only end of education is to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education therefore is to be considered as reason borrowed at second hand, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection.

And as physic may justly be called the art of restoring health, so education should be considered in no other light, than as the art of recovering to man the use of his reason.

2. Now as the instruction of every art or science, is founded upon the wisdom, experience, and maxims of the several great men that have laboured in it; so that right use of our reason, which young people should be called to by their education, is nothing but the best expe-

rience, and finest reasonings of men, that have devoted themselves to the improvement of human nature.

All therefore that great saints, and dying men, when the fullest of light and conviction, and after the highest improvement of their reason, have said of the necessity of piety, of the excellency of virtue, of the emptiness of riches, of the vanity of the world ; all the sentences, judgments, reasonings and maxims of the wisest of philosophers, when in their highest state of wisdom, should constitute the common lessons of instruction for youthful minds.

This is the only way to make the young and ignorant part of the world the better for the wisdom and knowledge of the wise and ancient.

3. The youths that attended upon Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Epictetus, were thus educated. Their every day lessons and instructions were so many lectures upon the nature of man, his true end, and the right use of his faculties ; upon the immortality of the soul, its relation to God, the beauty of virtue, and its agreeableness to the Divine nature ; upon the necessity of temperance, fortitude, and generosity, and the shame and folly of indulging our passions.

Now as Christianity has, as it were, new created the moral and religious world, and set every thing that is reasonable, wise, holy, and desirable, in its true point of light : so one would expect, that the education of youth should be as much bettered and amended by Christianity, as the doctrines of religion are amended by it.

As it has introduced a new state of things, and so fully informed us of the nature of man, and the end of his creation ; as it has fixed all our goods and evils, taught us the means of purifying our souls, pleasing God, and becoming eternally happy ; one might naturally suppose, that every Christian country abounded with schools, not only for teaching a few questions and answers of a catechism, but for the forming, training, and practising youths in such a course of life, as the highest precepts, the strictest rules, and the sublimest doctrines of Christianity require.

4. An education under Pythagoras, or Socrates, had no other end, but to teach youth to think, judge, and act, as Pythagoras and Socrates did.

And is it not as reasonable to suppose, that a Christian education should have no other end, but to teach youth how to think, and judge, and act, according to the strictest laws of Christianity ?

At least one would suppose, that in all Christian schools, the teaching youth to begin their lives in the spirit of Christianity, in such severity of behaviour, such abstinence, sobriety, humility, and devotion, as Christianity requires, should not only be more, but a hundred times more regarded, than any or all things else.

For our educators should imitate our guardian angels, suggest nothing to our minds but what is wise and holy ; help us to discover and subdue every vain passion of our hearts and every false judgment of our minds.

And it is as reasonable to expect and require

all this benefit of a Christian education, as to require that physic should strengthen all that is right in our nature, and remove that which is sickly and diseased.

5. But alas ! our modern education is not of this kind.

The first temper that we try to awaken in children, is pride ; as dangerous a passion as that of lust. We stir them up to vain thoughts of themselves, and do every thing we can to puff up their minds with a sense of their own abilities.

Whatever way of life we intend them for, we apply to the fire and vanity of their minds, and exhort them to every thing from corrupt motives ; we stir them up to action from principles of strife and ambition, from glory, envy, and a desire of distinction, that they may excel others, and shine in the eyes of the world.

And when we have taught them to scorn to be outdone by any, to bear no rival, to thirst after every instance of applause, to be content with nothing but the highest distinctions ; then we begin to take comfort in them, and promise the world some mighty things from youths of such a glorious spirit.

If children are intended for holy orders, we set before them some eminent orator, whose fine preaching has made him the admiration of the age, and carried him through all the dignities and preferments of the church.

We encourage them to have these honours in their eye, and to expect the reward of their studies from them.

If the youth is intended for a trade, we bid him look at the rich men of the same trade, and consider how many now are carried in their stately coaches, who began in the same low degree as he now does. We awaken his ambition, and endeavour to give his mind a right turn, by often telling him how very rich such and such a tradesman died.

If he is to be a lawyer, then we set great counsellors, lords, judges and chancellors, before his eyes. We tell him what great fees, and great applause attend fine pleading. We exhort him to take fire at these things, to raise a spirit of emulation in himself, and to be content with nothing less than the highest honours of the long robe.

6. That this is the nature of our best education, is too plain to need any proof; and I believe there are few parents, but would be glad to see these instructions daily given to their children.

And after all this, we complain of the effects of pride; we wonder to see grown men actuated and governed by ambition, envy, scorn, and a desire of glory; not considering that they were all the time of their youth called upon to form all their actions and industry upon the same principles.

You teach a child to scorn to be outdone, to thirst for distinction and applause; and is it any wonder that he continues to act all his life in the same manner?

Now if a youth is ever to be so far a Chris-

tian, as to govern his heart by the doctrines of humility, I would fain know at what time he is to begin it: or if he is ever to begin it at all, why we train him up in tempers quite contrary to it?

How dry and poor must the doctrines of humility sound to a youth, that had been spurred up to all his industry by ambition, envy, emulation, and a desire of glory and distinction? And if he is not to act by these principles when he is a man, why do we call him to act by them in his youth?

Envy is acknowledged by all people to be the most ungenerous, base, and wicked passion that can enter into the heart of man.

And is this the temper to be instilled, nourished and established in the minds of young people?

7. I know it is said, that it is not envy but emulation, that is intended to be awakened in the minds of young men.

But this is vainly said. For when children are taught to bear no rival, and to scorn to be outdone by any of their age, they are plainly and directly taught to be envious. For it is impossible for any one to have this scorn of being outdone, this contention with rivals, without burning with envy against all those that seem to excel him, or get any distinction from him. So that what children are taught is rank envy, and only covered with a name of less odious sound.

Secondly, if envy is thus confessedly bad, and it be only emulation that is endeavoured to be awakened in children, surely there ought to be

great care taken that children may know the one from the other ; that they may abominate the one as a great crime, whilst they give the other admission into their minds.

But if this were to be attempted, the fineness of the distinction betwixt envy and emulation, would show that it was easier to divide them in words, than to separate them in action.

For emulation, when it is defined in its best manner, is nothing else but a refinement upon envy, or rather the most plausible part of that black and venomous passion.

And though it is easy to separate them in the notion, yet the most acute philosopher, that understands the art of distinguishing ever so well, if he gives himself up to emulation, will certainly find himself deep in envy.

8. It is said also, that ambition, and a desire of glory, are necessary to excite young people to industry ; and that if we were to press upon them the doctrines of humility, we should deject their minds, and sink them into dulness and idleness.

But these people who say this, do not consider, that this reason, if it has any strength, is full as strong against pressing the doctrines of humility upon grown men, lest we should deject their minds, and sink them into dulness and idleness.

This reason therefore that is given, why children should not be trained up in the principles of true humility, is as good a reason why the same humility should never be required of grown men.

Again, let those people, who think that child-

ren would be spoiled, if they were not thus educated, consider this.

Could they think, that if any children had been educated by our blessed Lord, or his holy apostles, their minds would have been sunk into dulness and idleness ?

Or could they think that such children would not have been trained up in the profoundest principles of humility ? Can they say that our blessed Lord, who was the humblest man that ever was on earth, was hindered by his humility from being the greatest example of worthy and glorious actions, that ever were done by man ?

Can they say that his apostles, who lived in the humble spirit of their Master, did therefore cease to be laborious and active instruments of doing good to all the world ?

A few such reflections as these, are sufficient to expose all the poor pretences for an education in pride and ambition.

9. Paternus lived about two hundred years ago ; he had but one son, whom he educated himself in his own house. As they were sitting together in a garden, when the child was ten years old, Paternus thus began to him :

The little time that you have been in the world, my child, you have spent wholly with me ; and my love and tenderness to you, has made you look upon me as your only friend and benefactor, and the cause of all the comfort and pleasure you enjoy ; your heart, I know, would be ready to break with grief, if you thought this was the last day that I should live with you.

But, my child, though you now think yourself mighty happy, because you have hold of my hand, you are now in the hands, and under the tender care of a much greater father and friend than I am, whose love to you is far greater than mine, and from whom you receive such blessings as no mortal eye can give.

That God whom you have seen me daily worship ; whom I daily call upon to bless both you and me, and all mankind ; whose wondrous acts are recorded in those Scriptures, which you constantly read. That God who created the heavens and the earth, who brought a flood upon the old world ; who saved Noah in the ark, who was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whom Job blessed and praised in the greatest afflictions ; who delivered the Israelites out of the hand of the Egyptians, who was the protector of righteous Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and holy Daniel ; who sent so many prophets into the world ; who sent his Son Jesus Christ to redeem mankind. This God, who has done all these great things ; who has created so many millions of men, who lived and died before you was born ; with whom the spirits of good men, that are departed this life, now live ; whom infinite numbers of angels now worship in heaven. This great God, who is the creator of worlds, of angels, and men, is your loving father and friend, your good creator and nourisher, from whom, and not from me, you received your being ten years ago, at the time that I planted that little tender elm which you there see.

10. I myself am not half the age of this shady oak, under which we sit; many of our fathers have sat under its boughs; we have all of us called it ours in our turn, though it stands, and drops its masters, as it drops its leaves.

You see, my son, this wide and large firmament over our heads, where the sun and moon, and all the stars appear in their turns. If you were to be carried up to any of these abodes at this vast distance from us, you would still discover others, as much above you, as the stars that you see here are above the earth. Were you to go up or down, east or west, north or south, you would find the same height without any top, and the same depth without any bottom.

And yet, my child, so great is God, that all these bodies added together, are but as a grain of sand in his sight. And yet you are as much the care of this great God, and Father of all worlds, and all spirits, as if he had no son but you, or there were no creature for him to love and protect but you alone. He numbers the hairs of your head, watches over you sleeping and waking, and has preserved you from a thousand dangers, which neither you nor I know any thing of.

11. How poor my power is, and how little I am able to do for you, you have often seen. Your late sickness has shown you how little I could do for you in that state; and the frequent pains of your head are plain proofs, that I have no power to remove them.

I can bring you food and medicines, but have

no power to turn them into your relief and nourishment ; it is God alone that can do this for you.

Therefore, my child, fear, and worship, and love God. Your eyes indeed cannot yet see him, but every thing you see, are so many marks of his power and presence, and he is nearer to you than any thing that you can see.

Take him for your Lord, and Father, and Friend ; look up to him as the fountain and cause of all the good that you have received through my hands ; and reverence me only as the bearer and minister of God's good things unto you ; and he that blessed my father before I was born, will bless you when I am dead.

Your youth and little mind is only yet acquainted with my family, and therefore you think there is no happiness out of it.

But, my child, you belong to a greater family than mine ; you are a younger member of the family of this Almighty Father of all nations, who has created infinite orders of angels, and numberless generations of men, to be fellow members of one and the same society in heaven.

12. You do well to reverence my authority, because God has given me power over you, to bring you up in his fear, and to do for you, as the holy fathers recorded in Scripture did for their children, who are now in rest and peace with God.

I shall in a short time die, and leave you to God and yourself ; and if God forgiveth my sins, I shall go to his Son Jesus Christ, and live amongst patriarchs and prophets, saints and

martyrs, where I shall pray for you, and hope for your safe arrival at the same place.

Therefore, my child, meditate on these great things, and let your thoughts often leave these gardens, these fields and farms, to contemplate God and heaven, to consider angels, and the spirits of good men living in light and glory.

As you have been used to look to me in all your actions, and have been afraid to do any thing, unless you first knew my will ; so let it now be your rule to look up to God in all your actions, to do every thing in his fear, and to abstain from every thing that is not according to his will.

Bear him always in your mind ; teach your thoughts to reverence him in every place ; for there is no place where he is not.

13. God keepeth a book of life, wherein all the actions of all men are written ; your name is there, my child ; and when you die, this book will be laid open before men and angels ; and according as your actions are there found, you will either be received to the happiness of those holy men who have died before you, or be turned away among wicked spirits, that are never to see God any more.

Never forget this book, my son ; for it is written, it must be opened, you must see it, and you must be tried by it. Strive therefore to fill it with your good deeds, that the handwriting of God may not appear against you.

God, my child, is all love, and wisdom, and goodness ; and every thing that he has made,

and every action that he does, is the effect of them all. Therefore you cannot please God, but so far as you strive to walk in love, wisdom, and goodness. As all wisdom, love, and goodness proceeds from God ; so nothing but love, wisdom, and goodness can lead to God.

When you love that which God loves, you act with him, you join yourself to him ; and when you love what he dislikes, then you oppose him, and separate yourself from him. This is the true and the right way ; think what God loves, and do you love it with all your heart.

14. First of all, my child, worship and adore God, think of him magnificently, speak of him reverently, magnify his providence, adore his power, frequent his service, and pray unto him constantly.

Next to this, love your neighbour, which is all mankind, with such tenderness and affection as you love yourself. Think how God loves all mankind, how merciful he is to them, how tender he is of them, how carefully he preserves them, and then strive to love the world, as God loves it.

God would have all men to be happy, therefore do you will and desire the same. All men are great instances of divine love, therefore let all men be instances of your love.

But above all, my son, mark this ; never do any thing through strife, or envy, or emulation, or vainglory. Never do any thing in order to excel other people, but in order to please God, and because it is his will, that you should do every thing in the best manner that you can.

For if it is once a pleasure to you to excel other people, it will by degrees be a pleasure to you to see other people not so good as yourself.

Banish, therefore, every thought of pride and distinction, and accustom yourself to rejoice in all the excellences of your fellow creatures, and be as glad to see any of their good actions, as your own.

For as God is as well pleased with their well doings, as with yours; so you ought to desire, that every thing that is wise, and holy, and good, may be performed in as high a manner by other people, as by yourself.

15. Let this, therefore, be your only motive to all good actions, to do every thing in as perfect a manner as you can; for this only reason, because it is pleasing to God, who writes all your actions in a book. When I am dead, my son, you will be master of all my estate, which will be a great deal more than the necessities of one family require. Therefore, as you are to be charitable to the souls of men, and wish them the same happiness with you in heaven; so be charitable to their bodies, and endeavour to make them as happy as you upon earth.

As God has created all things for the common good of all men; so let that part of them which has fallen to your share, be employed, as God would have all employed, for the common good of all.

Do good, my son, first of all to those that most deserve it, but remember to do good to all. The greatest sinners receive daily instances of

God's goodness toward them ; he nourishes and preserves them, that they may repent and return to him ; do you, therefore, imitate God, and think no one too bad to receive relief and kindness, when you see that he wants it.

16. I am teaching you Latin and Greek, not that you should desire to be a great critic, a fine poet, or an eloquent orator. I would not have your heart feel any of these desires ; for the desire of these accomplishments is vanity, and the masters of them are generally vain men.

But I teach you these languages, that at proper times you may look into the history of past ages, and learn the methods of God's providence over the world ; that reading the writings of the ancient sages, you may see how wisdom and virtue have been the praise of great men of all ages.

Let truth and plainness be the only ornament of your language, and study nothing but how to think of all things as they deserve, to choose every thing that is best, to live according to reason, and to act in every part of your life in conformity to the will of God.

Study how to fill your heart full of the love of God, and the love of your neighbour, and then be content to be no deeper a scholar, no finer a gentleman, than these tempers will make you. As true religion is nothing else but simple nature governed by right reason ; so it loves and requires great plainness and simplicity of life. Therefore, avoid all superfluous shows, finery, and equipage, and let your house be plainly fur-

nished with moderate conveniences. Do not consider what your estate can afford, but what right reason requires.

17. Let your dress be sober, clean, and modest ; not to set out the beauty of your person, but to declare the sobriety of your mind, that your outward garb may resemble the plainness of your heart. For it is highly reasonable, that you should be one man, all of apiece, and appear outwardly such as you are inwardly.

As to your meat and drink, in them observe the highest rules of Christian temperance and sobriety ; consider your body only as the servant of your soul ; and only so nourish it, that it may perform an humble and obedient service to it.

But, my son, observe this as a principal thing, which I shall remember you of as long as I live.

Hate and despise all human glory, for it is nothing else but human folly. It is the greatest snare, and the greatest betrayer that you can admit into your heart.

Let every day, therefore, be a day of humility ; condescend to all the infirmities of your fellow creatures, cover their frailties, love their excellences, encourage their virtues, relieve their wants, rejoice in their prosperities, compassionate their distresses, receive their friendship, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind.

18. Aspire after nothing but your own purity and perfection, and have no ambition but to do every thing in so religious a manner, that you

may be glad God is everywhere present, and sees all your actions. The greatest trial of humility is an humble behaviour towards your equals in age, estate and condition. Therefore be careful of all the motions of your heart toward these people. Let all your behaviour toward them be governed by unfeigned love. Have no desire to put any of your equals below you, nor any anger at those that would put themselves above you. If they are proud, they are ill of a very bad distemper; let them therefore have your tender pity, and perhaps your meekness may prove an occasion of their cure; but if your humility should do them no good, it will however be the greatest good to yourself.

Remember that there is but one man in the world, with whom you are to have perpetual contention, and be always striving to excel him, and that is yourself.

The time of practising these precepts, my child, will soon be over with you; the world will soon slip through your hands, or rather you will soon slip through it; it seems but the other day since I received these instructions from my dear father, that I am now leaving with you. And the God that gave me ears to hear, and a heart to receive what my father said unto me, will, I hope, give you grace to love and follow the same instructions.

CHAPTER XV.

Showing how the method of educating daughters, makes it difficult for them to enter into the spirit of Christian humility. How miserably they are injured and abused by such an education. The spirit of a better education, represented in the character of Eusebia.

1. THAT turn of mind which is taught and encouraged in the education of daughters, makes it exceeding difficult for them to enter into such a sense and practice of humility, as the spirit of Christianity requireth.

The right education of this sex is of the utmost importance. For though women do not carry on the trade and business of the world ; yet as they are mothers and mistresses of families, that have for some time the care of the education of their children, they are intrusted with that which is of the greatest consequence to human life. For this reason, good or bad women are likely to do as much good or harm in the world, as good or bad men in the greatest business.

For as the health and strength, or weakness of our bodies, is much owing to their methods of rearing us when we were young ; so the soundness or folly of our minds is not less owing to those first tempers and ways of thinking, which we eagerly received from the love, tenderness, authority, and constant conversation of our mothers.

As we call our first language our mother tongue, so we may as justly call our first tem-

pers our mother tempers ; and perhaps it may be found more easy to forget the language, than to part entirely with those tempers which we learned in the nursery.

2. It is therefore much to be lamented, that this sex who have the forming both of our bodies and minds, are not only educated in pride, but in the silliest and most contemptible part of it.

They are not indeed suffered to dispute with us the proud prizes of arts and sciences ; but we turn them over to the study of beauty and dress, and the whole world conspires to make them think of nothing else. Fathers and mothers, friends and relations, seem to have no other wish toward the little girl, but that she may have a fair skin, a fine shape, dress well, and dance to admiration.

Now if a fondness for our persons, a desire of beauty, a love of dress, be a part of pride, (as surely it is a most contemptible part of it,) the first step toward a woman's humility, seems to require a *répentence* of her education.

For it must be owned, that, generally speaking, good parents are never more fond of their daughters, than when they see them too fond of themselves, and dressed in such a manner, as is a great reproach to the gravity and sobriety of the Christian life.

3. The Church has formerly had eminent saints in that sex ; and it may reasonably be thought, that it is purely owing to their poor and vain education, that this honour of their sex is for the most part confined to former ages.

The corruption of the world indulges them in great vanity, and mankind seem to consider them in no other view, than as so many painted idols, that are to allure and gratify their passions ; so that if any women are vain, light, gewgaw creatures, they have this to excuse themselves, that they are not only such as their education has made them, but such as the generality of the world allows them to be.

But then they should consider that the friends to their vanity are no friends of theirs ; that they are to live for themselves ; that they have as great a share in the rational nature as men have ; that they have as much reason to pretend, and as much necessity to aspire after the highest accomplishment of Christian virtue, as the greatest and wisest among Christian philosophers.

They should consider, that they are abused and injured, and betrayed from their only perfection, whenever they are taught, that any thing is an ornament in them, that is not an ornament in the wisest among mankind.

4. It is generally said, that women are naturally of little and vain minds ; but this I look upon to be as false, as to say, that butchers are naturally cruel ; for as their cruelty is not owing to their nature, but to their way of life ; so whatever littleness and vanity is in the minds of women, it is like the cruelty of butchers, a temper that is wrought into them by that life which they are taught and accustomed to lead.

And if it were true that they were thus natur.

ally vain and light, then how much more blamable is that education, which seems contrived to strengthen and increase this folly and weakness of their minds?

For if it were a virtue in a woman to be proud and vain of herself, we could hardly take better means to raise this passion in her, than those that are now used in her education.

5. Matilda is a fine woman, of good breeding, and great sense. She has three daughters that are educated by herself. She will not trust them with any one else, or at any school, for fear they should learn any thing ill. She stays with the dancing master all the time he is with them, because she will hear every thing that is said to them. She has heard them read the Scriptures so often, that they can repeat a great part of it without book, and there is scarce a good book of devotion, but you may find it in their closets.

Had Matilda lived in the first ages of Christianity, she had in all probability been one of the greatest saints. But as she was born in corrupt times, where she hardly ever saw a piety higher than her own ; she has many defects, and communicates them to all her daughters.

6. Matilda never was meanly dressed in her life ; and nothing pleases her in dress, but that which is very rich, and beautiful to the eye.

Her daughters see her great zeal for religion, but then they see an equal earnestness for all sorts of finery. They see she is not negligent of her devotion ; but then they see her more

careful to preserve her complexion, and to prevent those changes which time and age threaten her with.

They are afraid to meet her if they have missed the church ; but then they are more afraid to see her, if they are not laced as straight as they can possibly be.

She often shows them her own picture which was taken when their father fell in love with her. She tells them how distracted he was with passion at the first sight of her ; and that she had never had so fine a complexion, but for the diligence of her good mother, who took exceeding care of it.

The children see so plainly the temper of their mother, that they affect to be more pleased with dress than they really are.

They saw their eldest sister once brought to her tears, and her perverseness severely reprimanded, for presuming to say, that she thought it was better to cover the neck than to go so far naked as the modern dress requires.

7. She stinteth them in their meals, and is very scrupulous of what they eat and drink, and tells them how many fine shapes she has seen spoiled in her time, for want of such care.

Whenever they begin to look sanguine and healthful, she calls in the assistance of the doctor ; and if physic, or issues, will keep the complexion from inclining to coarse or ruddy, she thinks them well employed.

By this means they are poor, pale, sickly, infirm creatures, vapoured through want of spirits,

crying at the smallest accidents, swooning away at any thing that frightens them, and hardly able to bear the weight of their best clothes.

The eldest daughter lived as long as she could under this discipline, and died in the twentieth year of her age.

When her body was opened, it appeared that her ribs had grown into her liver, and that her other entrails were much hurt, by being crushed together with her stays, which her mother had ordered to be twitched so strait, that it has often brought tears into her eyes, whilst the maid was dressing her.

Her youngest daughter ran away with a gamester, a man of great beauty, who in dressing and dancing has no superior.

Matilda says, she should die with grief at this accident, but that her conscience tells her, she has contributed nothing to it herself. She appeals to their closets, to their books of devotion, to testify what care she has taken to establish her children in piety.

8. Now, though I do not intend to say, that no daughters are brought up in a better way than this; yet thus much may be said, that the greater part of them are not brought up so well, or accustomed to so much religion.

Their minds are turned as much to the care of their beauty and dress, without having such rules of devotion to stand against. So that if solid piety is much wanted in that sex, it is the plain consequence of a corrupt education.

And if they are often ready to receive the first

fops, beaux, and fine dancers, for their husbands, it is no wonder that they should like that in men, which they have been taught to admire in themselves.

Some people will perhaps say, that I am exercising too great a severity against the sex.

But reasonable persons will observe, that I spare the sex, and only arraign their education; that I not only spare them, but plead their interest, assert their honour, and only condemn that education which is so injurious thereto.

Their education I cannot spare; but the only reason is, because it is their greatest enemy, because it deprives the world of so many blessings, and the Church of so many saints.

If it should here be said, that I even charge too high upon their education, and that they are not so much by it as I imagine.

It may be answered, that though I do not pretend to state the exact degree of mischief that is done by it, yet its plain and natural tendency to do harm, is sufficient to justify the most absolute condemnation of it.

9. But how possible it is to bring up daughters in a more excellent way, let the following character declare.

Eusebia is a pious widow, wellborn, and well-bred, and has a good estate for five daughters, whom she brings up as one intrusted by God, to fit five virgins for the kingdom of heaven. Her family has the same regulation as a religious house, and all its orders tend to the support of a constant regular devotion.

She loves them as her spiritual children, and they reverence her as their spiritual mother, with an affection far above that of the fondest friend.

She has divided part of her estate among them, that every one may be charitable out of their own stock, and each of them take it in their turns to provide for the poor and sick of the parish.

Eusebia brings them up to all kinds of labour that are proper for women, as sewing, knitting, spinning, and all other parts of housewifery ; not for their amusement, but that they be serviceable to themselves and others, and be saved from those temptations which attend an idle life.

She tells them, she had rather see them reduced to the necessity of maintaining themselves by their own work, than to have riches to excuse themselves from labour. For though, says she, you may be able to assist the poor without your labour, yet by your labour you will be able to assist them more.

10. If Eusebia has lived as free from sin as it is possible for human nature, it is because she is always watching and guarding against all instances of pride. And if her virtues are stronger and higher than other people's, it is because they are all founded in a deep humility.

My children, says she, when your father died I was much pitied by my friends, as having all the care of a family, and the management of an estate fallen upon me.

But my own grief was founded upon another principle ; I was grieved to see myself deprived

of so faithful a friend ; and that such an eminent example of Christian virtues should be taken from the eyes of his children, before they were of an age to love and follow it.

But as to worldly cares, which my friends thought so heavy upon me, they are most of them of our own making, and fall away as soon as we know ourselves.

If a person in a dream is disturbed with strange appearances, his trouble is over as soon as he is awake, and sees that it was a dream.

Now, when a right knowledge of ourselves enters into our minds, it makes as great a change in all our thoughts and apprehensions, as when we awake from the wanderings of a dream.

We acknowledge a man to be mad or melancholy, who fancies himself to be glass, and so is afraid of stirring ; or taking himself to be wax, dares not let the sun shine upon him.

But, my children, there are things in the world which pass for wisdom, politeness, grandeur, happiness, and fine breeding, which show as great ignorance of ourselves, and might as justly pass for thorough madness, as when a man fancies himself to be glass, or ice.

A woman that dares not appear in the world without fine clothes, that thinks it is a happiness to have a face finely coloured, to have a skin delicately fair, that had rather die than be reduced to poverty and be forced to work for a maintenance, is as ignorant of herself to the full, as he that fancies himself to be glass.

11. For this reason, all my discourse with

you has been to acquaint you with yourselves, and to accustom you to such books as might best instruct you in this greatest of all knowledge.

You would think it hard, not to know the family into which you were born, what ancestors you were descended from, and what estate was to come to you. But, my children, you may know all this with exactness, and yet be as ignorant of yourselves, as he that takes himself to be wax.

For though you were all of you born of my body, and bear your father's name, yet you are all of you pure spirits. I do not mean that you have not bodies ; but that all which deserves to be called you, is nothing else but spirit. A being spiritual and rational in its nature ; that is as contrary to all corporeal beings, as life is contrary to death ; that is made in the image of God, to live for ever, never to cease any more, but to enjoy life, and reason, and knowledge, and happiness, in the presence of God, and the society of angels, and the glorious spirits, to all eternity.

Every thing that you call yours, besides this spirit, is but like your clothing ; something that is only to be used for awhile, and then to end, and die, and wear away, and to signify no more to you, than the clothing and bodies of other people.

12. But, my children, you are not only in this manner spirits, but you are all fallen spirits, that began your life in a state of corruption and disorder, full of tempers and passions that blind and

darken your reason, and incline you to that which is hurtful.

Your bodies are not only poor and perishing like your clothes, but they are like ill infected clothes, that fill you with ill diseases, which oppress the soul with sickly appetites and vain cravings.

So that all of us are like two beings, that have as it were two hearts within us ; with the one we see and taste and admire reason and holiness, with the other, we incline to pride, and vanity, and sensual delights.

If you would know the one thing necessary to all the world, it is this ; to preserve and perfect all that is rational, holy, and divine in our nature, and to mortify, remove, and destroy all vanity, pride, and sensuality.

Could you think, my children, when you look at the world, and see what customs, and fashions, and pleasures, and troubles, and projects, employ the hearts and time of mankind, that things were thus ?

But do not be affected at these things ; the world is in a great dream, and but few people are awake in it.

We fancy that we fall into darkness when we die : but alas, we are most of us in the dark till then ; and the eyes of our souls only then begin to see, when our bodily eyes are closing.

13. You see then your state, my children ; you are to improve and perfect the spirit that is within you ; you are to prepare it for the kingdom of heaven, to nourish it with the love of

God, to adorn it with good works, and to make it as holy and heavenly as you can. You are to preserve it from the errors and vanities of the world ; to save it from the corruptions of the body, from those false delights and sensual tempers which the body tempts it with.

You are to nourish your spirits with pious readings and holy meditations, with watchings, fastings, and prayers, that you may relish that eternal state which is to begin when this life ends.

As to your bodies, you are to consider them as poor, perishing things, that are corrupt at present, and will soon drop into common dust ; you are to watch over them as enemies that are always trying to betray you, and so never follow their counsel ; you are to consider them as the place and habitation of your souls, and so keep them clean and decent ; you are to consider them as the servants and instruments of action, and so give them food, and rest, and raiment, that they may be strong and healthful to do the duties of a charitable, useful, and pious life.

Whilst you live thus, you live like yourselves ; and whenever you have less regard to your souls, or more regard to your bodies ; whenever you are more intent upon adorning your persons than upon perfecting your souls, you are much more beside yourselves, than he that had rather have a laced coat than a healthful body.

14. For this reason, my children, I have taught you nothing that was dangerous for you to learn : I have kept you from every thing that might betray you into weakness and folly : or

make you think any thing fine but a fine mind ; any thing happy, but the favour of God ; or any thing desirable, but to do all the good you possibly can.

Instead of the vain, immodest entertainment of plays and operas, I have taught you to delight in visiting the sick and poor. What music and dancing, and diversions, are to many in the world, that prayers, and devotions, and psalms are to you. Your hands have not been employed in plaiting the hair, and adorning your persons ; but in making clothes for the naked. You have not wasted your fortunes upon yourselves, but have added your labour to them, to do more good to other people.

Instead of forced shapes, genteel airs, and affected motions, I have taught you to conceal your bodies with modest garments, and let the world have nothing to view of you, but the plainness, and sincerity, and humility of all your behaviour.

15. You know, my children, the high perfection and the great rewards of virginity ; you know how it frees from worldly cares and troubles, and furnishes means and opportunities of higher advancements in the divine life. Therefore, love and esteem and honour virginity ; bless God for all that glorious company of holy virgins, that from the beginning of Christianity have, in the several ages of the Church renounced the cares and pleasures of matrimony, to be perpetual examples of contemplation and prayer.

But as every one has their proper gift from God, as I look upon you all to be so many great blessings of a married state; so I leave to your choice, either to do as I have done, or to aspire after higher degrees of perfection in a virgin state.

I press nothing upon you, but to make the most of human life, and to aspire after perfection in whatever state you choose.

Never, therefore, consider yourselves as persons that are to be seen, admired, and courted by men; but as poor sinners, that are to save yourselves from the vanities and follies of a miserable world. Learn to live for your own sakes, and the service of God; and let nothing in the world be of any value with you, but that which you can turn into a service to God, and a means of your future happiness.

16. Whether married, therefore, or unmarried, consider yourselves as mothers and sisters, as friends and relations, to all that want your assistance; and never allow yourselves to be idle, whilst others are in want of any thing that your hands can make for them.

This useful, charitable, humble employment of yourselves, is what I recommend to you with great earnestness; and besides the good you will thereby do to other people, your own hearts will be improved by it.

For next to reading, meditation, and prayer, there is nothing that so secures our hearts from foolish passions, as some useful, humble employment of ourselves.

Never, therefore, consider your labour as an amusement that is to get rid of your time, and so may be as trifling as you please ; but consider it as something that is to be serviceable to yourselves and others, that is to serve some sober ends of life, to save and redeem your time, and make it turn to your account when the works of all people shall be tried by fire.

If there is any good to be done by your labour, if you can possibly employ yourselves usefully to other people, how silly is it, how contrary to the wisdom of religion, to make that a mere amusement, which might as easily be made an exercise of the greatest charity !

What would you think of the wisdom of him, that should employ his time in distilling of waters, and making liquors which nobody could use, merely to amuse himself with the variety of their colour, when with less labour and expense, he might satisfy the wants of those who have nothing to drink ?

Yet he would be as wisely employed, as those that are amusing themselves with such tedious works as they neither need, nor hardly know how to use when they are finished ; when, with less labour and expense, they might be doing as much good as he that is clothing the naked, or visiting the sick.

Be glad, therefore, to know the wants of the poorest people, and let your hands be employed in making such things for them as their necessities require. By thus making your labour a gift and service to the poor, your ordinary work

will be changed into a holy service, and made as acceptable to God as your devotions.

This will make you true disciples of your meek Lord and Master, who "came into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" and though he was Lord of all and among the creatures of his own making, yet was among them "as one that serveth."

17. Christianity has then had its effect upon your hearts, when it has removed pride from you, and made you delight in humbling yourselves beneath the lowest of all your fellow creatures.

Live therefore my children, as you have begun your lives, in humble labour for the good of others ; not in ceremonious visits and vain acquaintances. Contract no foolish friendships, or vain fondnesses for particular persons ; but love them most, that most turn your love toward God, and your compassion toward all the world.

But above all, avoid the conversation of fine-bred fops and beaux, and hate nothing more than the idle discourse, flattery, and compliments of that sort of men ; for they are the shame of their own sex, and ought to be the abhorrence of yours.

When you go abroad, let humility, modesty, and a decent carriage, be all the state you take upon you ; and let tenderness, compassion, and good nature, be all the fine breeding you show in any place.

If evil speaking, scandal, or backbiting, be the conversation where you happen to be, be as much grieved, as if you were amongst cursing and swearing, and retire as soon as you can.

Though you intend to marry, yet let the time never come, till you find a man that has those perfections which you have been labouring after yourselves ; who is likely to be a friend to all your virtues, and with whom it is better to live, than to want the benefit of his example.

18. Love poverty, and reverence poor people ; as for many reasons, so particularly for this, because our blessed Saviour was one of the number.

Visit and converse with them frequently ; you will often find simplicity, innocence, patience, fortitude, and great piety amongst them.

Rejoice at every opportunity of doing an humble action ; whether it be, as the Scripture expresses it, in washing the saints' feet, that is, in waiting upon, and serving those that are below you, or in bearing with the haughtiness and ill manners of those that are your equals, or above you. For there is nothing better than humility ; it is the fruitful soil of all virtues, and every thing that is kind and good, naturally grows from it.

Therefore, my children, pray for, and practise humility ; and reject every thing in dress, or carriage, or conversation, that has any appearance of pride.

Strive to do every thing that is praiseworthy, but do nothing in order to be praised ; nor think of any reward for your labours of love, till Christ cometh with all his holy angels.

19. And above all, my children, have a care of vain thoughts of your own virtues. For as soon as ever people live different from the com-

mon way of the world, the devil represents to their minds the height of their perfections ; and is content they should excel in good works, provided he can make them proud of them.

Therefore watch over your virtues with a jealous eye, and reject every vain thought, as you would reject the most wicked imaginations ; and think what a loss it would be to you, to have the fruit of all your good works devoured by the vanity of your minds.

Never therefore allow yourselves to despise those who do not follow our rules, but love them, and pray to God for them ; and let humility be always whispering in your ears, that you yourselves would fall from those rules to-morrow, if God should leave you to your own strength and wisdom.

When, therefore, you have spent days and weeks well, do not suffer your hearts to contemplate any thing as your own, but give all the glory to God, who has carried you through such rules of holy living, as you were not able to observe by your own strength ; and take care to begin the next day, not as proficients in virtue, that can do great matters, but as poor beginners, that want the daily assistance of God, to save you from the grossest sins.

20. Your dear father was an humble, watchful, pious, wise man. Whilst his sickness would suffer him to talk with me, his discourse was chiefly about your education. He knew the benefits of humility, he saw the ruins which pride made in our sex ; and therefore he con-

jured me with the tenderest expressions, to renounce the fashionable ways of educating daughters in pride and softness, in the care of their beauty and dress ; and to bring you all up in the plainest, simplest instances of an humble, holy, and industrious life.

He taught me an admirable rule of humility, which he practised all the days of his life ; which was this, to let no morning pass, without thinking upon some frailty and infirmity of our own, that may put us to confusion, make us blush inwardly, and entertain a mean opinion of ourselves.

Think, therefore, my children, that the soul of your good father, who is now with God, speaks to you through my mouth ; and let the double desire of your father who is gone, and me who am with you, prevail upon you to love God, to study your own perfection, to practise humility, and, with innocent labour, to do all the good you can to all your fellow creatures, till God calls you to another life.

Thus did the pious widow educate her daughters. And a very ordinary knowledge of the spirit of Christianity may convince us that no education can be of true advantage to young women, but that which trains them up in humble industry, in great plainness of life, exact modesty of dress, manners, and carriage, and in strict devotion. For what should a Christian woman be, but a plain, unaffected, modest, humble creature, averse to every thing in her dress and carriage, that can draw the eyes of beholders.

or gratify the passions of lewd and amorous persons.

21. These considerations may teach you to let no day pass without a serious application to God, for the whole spirit of humility. Fervently beseeching him to fill every part of your soul with it, to make it the ruling, constant habit of your mind, that you may not only feel it, but feel all your other tempers arising from it ; that you may have no thoughts, no desires, no designs, but such as are the true fruits of an humble, meek, and lowly heart.

That you may always appear poor, and little, and mean in your own eyes, and fully content that others should have the same opinion of you.

That the whole course of your life, your expense, your house, your dress, your manner of eating, drinking, conversing, and doing every thing, may be so many continual proofs of the humility of your heart.

That you may look for nothing, claim nothing, resent nothing ; that you may go through all the actions of life, calmly and quietly, as in the presence of God, looking wholly unto him, acting wholly for him ; neither seeking applause, nor resenting neglects, or affronts, but doing and receiving every thing, in the meek and lowly spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER XVI.

Recommending devotion at twelve o'clock, called in Scripture the sixth hour of the day. This frequency of devotion equally desirable by all orders of people. Universal love is recommended to be the subject of prayer at this hour. Of intercession as an act of universal love.

1. It will perhaps be thought by some, that these hours of prayer come too thick, and are only fit for monasteries, or such people as have no more to do in the world than they have.

To this it is answered.

This method of devotion is not pressed upon any as absolutely necessary, but recommended to all people, as the best, the happiest way of life.

And if exemplary devotion is as much the happiness and perfection of a merchant, a soldier, or a man of quality, as it is the happiness and perfection of the most retired, contemplative life, then it is as proper to recommend it without any abatement to one order of men, as to another.

Here is, therefore, no excuse for men of business and figure. First, because it would be to excuse them from that which is the end of living, to make them less beneficial to themselves, and less serviceable to God and the world.

Secondly, Because most men of business and figure engage too far in worldly matters; much farther than the reasons of human life or the necessities of the world require.

Merchants and tradesmen, for instance, are

generally ten times further engaged in business than they need ; which is so far from being a reasonable excuse for their want of time for devotion, that it is their crime, and must be censured as a blameable instance of covetousness and ambition.

Gentry and people of figure either give themselves up to state employments, or to the gratifications of their passions, in a life of gayety and debauchery ; and if these things might be admitted as allowable avocations from devotion, devotion must be reckoned a poor circumstance of life.

Unless gentlemen can show that they have another God, than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; another nature, than that which is derived from Adam ; another religion than the Christian, it is in vain to plead their state, and dignity, as reasons for not preparing their souls for God, by a strict and regular devotion.

2. If a merchant having forborne too great business, that he might quietly attend on the service of God, should die worth twenty instead of fifty thousand pounds, could any one say he had mistaken his calling, or gone a loser out of the world ?

If a gentleman should have killed fewer foxes, been less frequent at balls, gaming, and merry meetings, because stated parts of his time had been given to retirement, to meditation, and devotion, could it be thought, that when he left the world, he would regret the loss of those hours, that he had given to the improvement of his soul ?

If a tradesman by aspiring after Christian perfection, and retiring often from business, should instead of leaving his children fortunes to spend in luxury and idleness, leave them to live by their own honest labour ; could it be said that he had made a wrong use of the world, because he had more regard to that which is eternal, than to this which is so soon to be at an end ?

Since, therefore, devotion is not only the best and most desirable practice in a cloister, but in every state of life, they that desire to be excused from it, because they are men of figure, and estates, and business, are no wiser than those, that should desire to be excused from health and happiness, because they were men of figure and estates.

3. I cannot see why every gentleman, merchant or soldier, should not put these questions seriously to himself :

What is the best thing for me to aim at in all my actions ? How shall I do to make the most of human life ? What ways shall I wish that I had taken, when I am leaving the world ?

Now to be thus wise seems but a small and necessary piece of wisdom. For how can we pretend to sense and judgment, if we dare not seriously consider, and govern our lives by that which such questions require of us ?

Shall a nobleman think his birth too high to condescend to such questions as these ? Or a tradesman think his business too great, to take any care about himself ?

Now here is desired no more devotion in any

one's life, than the answering these few questions require.

Any devotion that is not to the greater advantage of him that uses it, than any thing he can do in the room of it; any devotion that does not procure an infinitely greater good, than can be got by neglecting it, is yielded up.

But if people will live in so much ignorance, as never to put these questions to themselves, but push on a blind life at all chances, in quest of they know not what, or why; without ever considering the worth, or value, or tendency of their actions, without considering what God, reason, eternity, and their own happiness require of them; it is for the honour of devotion, that none can neglect it, but those who are thus inconsiderate, who dare not inquire after that which is the best and most worthy of their choice.

4. It is true, Claudius, you are a man of figure and estate, and are to act the part of such a station in life; you are not called as Elijah was, to be a prophet, or as St. Paul, to be an apostle.

But will you therefore not love yourself? Will you not seek and study your own happiness?

You would think it very absurd for a man not to value his own health, because he was not a physician; or the preservation of his limbs, because he was not a bonesetter. Yet it is more absurd for you, Claudius, to neglect the improvement of your soul, because you are not an apostle or a bishop.

Consider, "we must all appear before the

judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v, 10. Now if your estate would excuse you from appearing before this judgment seat; if your figure could protect you from receiving according to your works, there would be some pretence for your leaving devotion to other people. But if you, who are now thus distinguished, must then appear naked amongst common souls, without any other distinction from others, but such as your virtues or sins give you; does it not as much concern you, as any prophet or apostle, to make the best provision for that great day?

Consider the words of St. Peter: "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation," 1 Pet. i, 15.

If, therefore, Claudio, you are one of those here called, you see what it is you are called to. It is not to have so much religion as suits with your temper, your business, or your pleasures; it is not a particular sort of piety, that may be sufficient for gentlemen of figure and estate; but it is first, to be "holy as he which hath called you is holy;" secondly, it is to be thus holy in all manner of conversation; that is, to carry this spirit and degree of holiness into every part, and through the whole form of your life.

And the reason the apostle immediately gives, why the spirit of holiness must be the common spirit of Christians, as such, is very affecting, and such as equally calls upon all sorts of Chris-

tians. "Forasmuch as ye know, that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation,—but with the precious blood of Christ."

As if he had said, forasmuch as ye know ye were made capable of this state of holiness, entered into a society with Christ, and made heirs of his glory, not by any human means, but by such a mysterious instance of love, as infinitely exceeds every thing that can be thought of in this world; since God has redeemed you to himself, and your own happiness, at so great a price, how base and shameful must it be, if you do not henceforth devote yourselves wholly to the glory of God, and become holy, as he who hath called you is holy?

5. Again, the apostle saith, "Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, and ye are not your own? for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit which are God's," 1 Cor. vi, 19, 20.

How poorly, therefore, Cladius, have you read the Scripture, how little do you know of Christianity, if you can talk of your estate and condition, as a pretence for a freer kind of life?

Are you any more your own, than he that has no estate or dignity in the world? Must mean and little people preserve their bodies as temples of the Holy Ghost, by watching, fasting, and prayer; but may you indulge yours in idleness, in lusts and sensuality, because you have so much rent, or such a title of distinction?

And you must either think thus, or else acknowledge that the holiness of saints, prophets, and apostles, is the holiness that you are to labour after, with all diligence and care.

And if you leave it to others, to live in such piety and devotion, in such self denial, humility, and temperance, as may render them able to glorify God in their body, and in their spirit ; you must leave it to them, also, to have the benefit of the blood of Christ.

6. Thus much being said to show that great devotion is not to be left to any particular sort of people, but to be the common spirit of all Christians ; I now proceed to consider the nature of universal love, which is here recommended to be the subject of your devotion at this hour.

By intercession, is meant a praying to God in behalf of our fellow creatures.

Our blessed Lord hath recommended his love to us, as the pattern of our love to one another. As therefore he is continually making intercession for us all, so ought we to intercede for one another.

“A new commandment,” saith he, “I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.”

The newness of this precept did not consist in this, that men were commanded to love one another ; for this was an old precept, both of the law of Moses and of nature. But it was new in this respect, that it was to imitate a new, and

till then, unheard of example of love ; it was to love one another as Christ had loved us.

And if men are to know that we are disciples of Christ, by our loving one another, according to his example, then if we are void of this love, we make it plainly known we are none of his disciples.

7. There is no principle more acceptable to God, than a universal fervent love to all mankind, wishing and praying for their happiness ; because there is no principle that makes us more like God, who is love and goodness itself, and created all beings for the enjoyment of happiness.

The greatest idea that we can frame of God is, a being of infinite love and goodness ; using infinite wisdom and power for the common good and happiness of all his creatures.

The highest notion, therefore, that we can form of man is when we conceive him as like God in this respect as he can be ; using all his finite faculties, whether of wisdom, power, or prayers, for the common good of all his fellow creatures ; heartily desiring they may have all the happiness they are capable of, and as many assistances from him, as his condition in the world will permit him to give them.

And, on the other hand, what a baseness and iniquity is there in all instances of hatred, envy, spite and ill will ; if we consider that every instance of them is so far acting in opposition to God, and intending mischief and harm to those creatures, which God favours, and protects, and preserves, in order to their happiness. An ill-

natured man amongst God's creatures, is the most perverse creature in the world, acting contrary to that love, by which himself subsists, and which alone gives subsistence to all that variety of beings, that enjoy life in any part of the creation.

8. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them."

Now, though this is a doctrine of strict justice, yet it is only a universal love that can comply with it.

As we have no degrees of spite, or ill will to ourselves, so we cannot be disposed toward others as we are toward ourselves, till we universally renounce all instances of spite and ill will, even in the smallest degrees.

If we had any imperfection in our eyes, that made us see any one thing wrong, for the same reason they would show us a hundred things wrong.

So if we have any temper of our hearts that makes us spiteful or illnatured toward any one man, the same temper will make us envious, and spiteful, and illnatured toward a great many more.

If, therefore, we desire this love, we must exercise our hearts in the love of all, because it is not Christian love, till it is the love of all.

If a man could keep this whole law of love, and yet offend in one point, he would be guilty of all. For as one allowed instance of injustice destroys the justice of all our other actions; so one allowed instance of envy, spite, or ill will,

renders all our other acts of affection nothing worth.

Acts of love, that proceed not from a principle of universal love, are but like acts of justice that proceed from a heart not disposed to universal justice.

9. Now, the noblest motive to universal tenderness is this, "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God."

Who, therefore, whose heart has any tendency toward God, would not aspire after this divine temper?

How should we rejoice in the exercise of this love, which is an assurance to us, that we act according to his spirit, who is love itself!

God willeth the happiness of all beings, though it is no happiness to himself; therefore we must desire the happiness of all beings, though no happiness cometh to us from it.

God equally delighteth in the perfections of all his creatures; therefore we should rejoice in those perfections, wherever we see them, and be as glad to have other people perfect as ourselves.

10. God, besides his own great example of love, which ought to draw all his creatures after it, has so provided for us, and made our happiness so common to us all, that we have no occasion to envy or hate one another.

For we cannot stand in one another's way; or by enjoying our true good, keep another from his full share of it.

As we cannot be happy, but in the enjoyment

of God; so we cannot rob one another of this happiness.

And as to other things, the enjoyments of this life, they are so little in themselves, so foreign to our happiness: and, generally speaking, so contrary to that which they appear to be, that they are no foundation for envy or hatred.

How silly it would be to envy a man, that was drinking poison out of a golden cup! And yet who can say, that he is acting wiser than thus, when he is envying any instance of worldly greatness?

11. How many saints has adversity sent to heaven? And how many sinners has prosperity plunged into everlasting misery? A man seems to be in the most glorious state, when he has conquered, disgraced and humbled his enemy; though it may be, that same conquest has saved his adversary, and undone himself.

This man perhaps had never been debauched, but for his fortune and advancement; that had never been pious, but through his poverty and disgrace.

She that is envied for her beauty, may, perchance owe all her misery to it; and another may be for ever happy, for having had no admirers of her person.

One man succeeds in every thing, and so loses all: another meets with nothing but crosses and disappointments, and thereby gains more than all the world is worth.

This clergyman may be undone by his being made a bishop; and that may save both him-

self and others, by being fixed to his poor vi-
carage.

How envied was Alexander, when conquering the world ; he built towns, set up his statues, and left marks of his glory in so many kingdoms

And how despised was the poor preacher St. Paul, when he was beaten with rods ! And yet how strangely was the world mistaken in their judgment ! how much to be envied was St. Paul ! How much to be pitied was Alexander !

These few reflections show, that the different conditions of this life have nothing in them to excite our uneasy passions, nothing that can reasonably interrupt our love and affection to one another.

12. To proceed now to another motive of this universal love.

Our power of doing external acts of love, is often very narrow and restrained. There are, it may be, but few people to whom we can contribute any worldly relief.

But though our outward means of doing good are often thus limited, yet if our hearts are full of love, we get as it were, an infinite power ; because God will attribute to us those good works, which we would have performed, had it been in our power.

You cannot heal all the sick, relieve all the poor ; you cannot comfort all in distress, nor be a father to all the fatherless. You cannot, it may be, deliver many from their misfortunes, or teach them to find comfort in God.

But if there is a love in your heart, that ex-

cites you to do all that you can ; if your love has no bounds, but continually wishes and prays for the relief of all that are in distress, you will be received by God as a benefactor to those, who had nothing from you but your good will, and tender affections.

You cannot build hospitals for the incurable ; but if you join in your heart with those that do ; if you are a friend to those great friends to mankind, and rejoice in their eminent virtues, you will be received by God as a sharer of such good works, as though they had none of your hands, yet had all your heart.

This consideration surely is sufficient to make us watch over our hearts with all diligence ; and aspire after the height of a loving, charitable, and benevolent mind.

13. And, on the other hand, we may hence learn the great evil of envy, spite, hatred, and ill will. For if the goodness of our hearts will entitle us to the reward of good actions, which we never performed, it is certain that the badness of our hearts will bring us under the guilt of actions that we have never committed.

As he that lusteth after a woman shall be reckoned an adulterer, though he has only committed the crime in his heart ; so the malicious, spiteful, illnatured man, that only secretly rejoices at evil, shall be reckoned a murderer, though he has shed no blood.

Since, therefore, our hearts, which are always naked and open to the eyes of God, give such an exceeding extent and increase, either to our

virtues or vices, it is our greatest business to govern the motions of our hearts, to correct and improve the inward state of our souls.

14. Now there is nothing that so much exalts our souls, as this heavenly love ; it cleanses and purifies like a holy fire, and all ill tempers fall away before it. By love, I do not mean any natural tenderness, which is more or less in people, according to their constitutions ; but a larger principle of the soul, which makes us kind to all our fellow creatures, as creatures of God, and for his sake.

It is this love that loves all things in God, as his creatures, as the images of his power, as the creatures of his goodness, as parts of his family, as members of his society, that becomes a holy principle of all great and good actions.

These reasons sufficiently show, that no love is holy, or religious, till it becomes universal.

For if religion requires me to love all persons, as God's creatures, that belong to him, that bear his image, enjoy his protection, and make parts of his family and household ; if these are the great reasons why I should live in love with any one man in the world, they are the same great reasons why I should live in love with every man in the world ; and consequently, I offend against all these reasons, whenever I want love toward any one man. The sin therefore of hating or despising any one man, is like the sin of hating all God's creation ; and the necessity of loving any one man, is the same necessity of loving every man in the world. And

though many people may appear to us ever so sinful, odious or extravagant in their conduct, we must never look upon that as the least motive for any contempt or disregard of them ; but look upon them with the greater compassion, as being in the most pitiable condition that can be.

15. As it was the sins of the world, that made the Son of God become a compassionate suffering advocate for all mankind ; so no one is of the spirit of Christ, but he that has the utmost compassion for sinners. And you have never less reason to be pleased with yourself, than when you find yourself most offended at the behaviour of others. All sin is certainly to be hated ; but then, we must set ourselves against sin, as we do against sickness and diseases, by showing ourselves tender and compassionate to the sick and diseased.

All other hatred of sin, which does not fill the heart with the softest, tenderest affections toward persons miserable in it, is the servant of sin at the same time that it seems to be hating it.

And there is no temper which even good men ought more carefully to guard against than this.—For it is a temper that lurks under the cover of many virtues, and by being unsuspected, does the more mischief.

A man naturally fancies, that it is his own love of virtue that makes him not able to bear with those that want it ; and when he abhors one man, despises another, and cannot bear the name of a third, he supposes it all to be a proof of his own high sense of virtue, and just hatred of sin.

And yet one would think that a man needed no other cure for this temper, than this one reflection :

That if this had been the spirit of the Son of God, if he had hated sin in this manner, there had been no redemption of the world : if God had hated sinners in this manner, the world itself had ceased long ago.

This therefore we may take for a certain rule, that the more we partake of the Divine nature, and the higher our sense of virtue is, the more we shall compassionate those that want it. The sight of such people will then, instead of raising in us a haughty contempt, or peevish indignation toward them, fill us with such bowels of compassion, as when we see the miseries of a hospital.

16. That the follies, therefore, and ill behaviour of our fellow creatures, may not lessen that love which we are to have for all mankind, we should often consider the reasons on which this duty of love is founded.

Now we are to love our neighbour, that is all mankind, not because they are wise, holy, or virtuous ; for all mankind never was, nor ever will be so.

Again, if their goodness were the reason of our being obliged to love people, we should have no rule to proceed by ; because though some people's virtues or vices are notorious, yet, generally speaking, we are but ill judges of the virtue of other people.

Thirdly, We are sure that the virtue of per-

sons is not the reason of our being obliged to love them, because we are commanded to pay the highest instances of love to our worst enemies; we are to love, and bless, and pray for those that most injuriously treat us. This, therefore, is demonstration, that the merit of persons is not the reason on which our obligation to love them is founded.

Let us further consider what that love is which we owe to our neighbour. It is to love him as ourselves, that is, to wish him every thing that we may lawfully wish to ourselves; to be glad of every good, and sorry for every evil that happens to him; and to be ready to do him all such acts of kindness, as we are always ready to do to ourselves.

This love, therefore, you see, is nothing but a love of benevolence; it requires nothing of us but good wishes, tender affections, and such acts of kindness, as we show to ourselves.

17. Now we are obliged to this love, in imitation of God's goodness, that we may be children of our Father which is in heaven, who willeth the happiness of all his creatures, and maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good.

Again, our redemption by Jesus Christ, calleth us to the exercise of this love, who came from heaven, and laid down his life, out of love to the whole sinful world.

Lastly, our Lord and Saviour has required us to love one another, as he loved us.

These are the great perpetual reasons, on

which our obligation to love all mankind as our selves is founded.

These reasons never vary ; they always continue in their full force ; and therefore equally oblige at all times, and in regard to all persons.

God loves us, not because we are wise, and good, and holy, but in pity to us, because we want this happiness. He loves us in order to make us good. Our love, therefore, must take this course ; not looking for, or requiring the merit of our brethren, but pitying their disorders, and wishing them all the good that they want, and are capable of receiving.

18. You will perhaps ask, if you are not to have a particular esteem for good men ? Yes : but this esteem is very different from that love of benevolence which we owe to our neighbour.

The distinction betwixt love of benevolence and esteem, is plain and obvious.

No man is to have a high esteem for his own accomplishments or behaviour ; yet every man is to love himself, that is, to wish well to himself ; therefore, this distinction between love and esteem, is not only plain, but very necessary to be observed.

Again, if you think it hardly possible to dislike the actions of unreasonable men, and yet have a true love for them, consider this with relation to yourself.

It is very possible for you not only to dislike, but to detest and abhor a great many of your own past actions. But do you then lose any of those tender sentiments toward yourself, which

you used to have? Do you then cease to wish well to yourself? Is not the love of yourself as strong then as at any other time?

Now what is thus possible with relation to ourselves, is possible with relation to others. We may have the highest good wishes toward them, desiring for them every good that we desire for ourselves, and yet at the same time dislike their way of life.

19. To conclude: all that love which we may justly have for ourselves, we are in strict justice obliged to exercise toward all other men; and we offend against the great law of our nature, when our tempers toward others are different from those which we have toward ourselves.

Now that self love which is just and reasonable, keeps us constantly tender, compassionate, and well affected toward ourselves. If, therefore, you do not feel these kind dispositions toward all other people, you may be assured that you are not in that state of charity, which is the very life and soul of Christian piety.

You know how it hurts you to be made the jest and ridicule of other people; how it grieves you to be robbed of your reputation: if, therefore, you expose others to scorn and contempt in any degree; if it pleases you to see or hear of their frailties and infirmities; or if you are only loath to conceal their faults, you are so far from loving such people as yourself, that you may be justly supposed to have as much hatred for them, as you have love for yourself. For

such tempers are as truly the proper fruits of hatred, as the contrary tempers are the proper fruits of love.

And as it is a certain sign that you love yourself, because you are tender of every thing that concerns you ; so it is as certain a sign that you hate your neighbour, when you are pleased with any thing that hurts him.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of the necessity and benefit of intercession, considered as an exercise of universal love. How all orders of men are to intercede with God for one another. How such intercession amends and reforms the heart.

1. THAT intercession is a great and necessary part of Christian devotion, is very evident from Scripture.

The first followers of Christ seem to support all their love by prayers for one another.

St. Paul, whether he writes to churches or particular persons, shows that they are the constant subject of his prayers.

Thus to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you ; always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy," Phil. i, 4, 5.

His devotion had also the same care for particular persons, as appears by the following passage : "I thank my God, whom I serve from my forefathers, with a pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day," 2 Tim. i, 3. How holy

an acquaintance and friendship was this, how worthy of persons that were raised above the world, and related to one another, as new members of a kingdom of heaven !

2. Apostles and great saints did not only thus bless particular churches and private persons ; but they themselves also received graces from God by the prayers of others. Thus saith St. Paul to the Corinthians, " You also helping together by prayers for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf," 2 Cor. i, 11.

This was the ancient friendship of Christians, uniting and cementing their hearts, not by worldly considerations, or human passions, but by the mutual communication of spiritual blessings, by prayers and thanksgivings to God for one another.

It was this holy intercession that raised Christians to such a state of mutual love, as far exceeded all that had been admired in human friendship. And when the same spirit of intercession is again in the world, this holy friendship will be again in fashion, and Christians will be again the wonder of the world, for that exceeding love which they bear to one another.

For a frequent intercession with God, earnestly beseeching him to forgive the sins of all mankind, to bless them with his providence, enlighten them with his Spirit, and bring them to everlasting happiness, is the divinest exercise that the heart of man can be engaged in.

3. Be daily, therefore, on your knees, in a solemn deliberate performance of this devotion, praying for others with such length, importunity, and earnestness, as you use for yourself; and you will find all little, illnatured passions die away; and your heart will delight in the common happiness of others, as you need only to delight in your own.

For it is hardly possible for you to beseech God to make any one happy in his glory to all eternity, and yet be troubled to see him enjoy the much smaller gifts of God in this life.

But the greatest benefits of intercession are then received, when it descends to such particular instances as our state and condition in life more particularly require of us.

Though we are to treat all mankind as neighbours and brethren as occasion offers; yet as we can only live in the actual society of a few, and are more particularly related to some than others; so when our intercession is made an exercise of love and care for those amongst whom our lot is fallen, or who belong to us in a nearer relation, it then becomes the greatest benefit to ourselves.

If, therefore, you should always alter your intercessions, according as the needs of your neighbours or acquaintance require; beseeching God to deliver them from such or such particular evils, or to grant them this or that particular gift or blessing; such intercessions, besides the great charity of them, would have a mighty effect upon your own heart.

4. This would make it pleasant to you to be courteous, civil, and condescending to all about you, and make you unable to say or do a rude or hard thing to those for whom you had used yourself to be so kind and compassionate in your prayers.

For there is nothing that makes us love a man so much as praying for him ; and when you can once do this sincerely for any man, you have fitted your soul for the performance of every thing that is kind and civil toward him. This will fill your heart with a generosity and tenderness, that will give you a better and sweeter behaviour, than any thing that is called fine breeding and good manners.

By considering yourself as an advocate with God for your neighbours and acquaintance, you would never find it hard to be at peace with them yourself. It would be easy to you to bear with, and forgive those, for whom you particularly implored the divine mercy and forgiveness.

Such prayers as these amongst neighbours and acquaintance, would unite them to one another in the strongest bonds of love and tenderness. It would teach them to consider one another in a higher state, as members of a spiritual society that are created for the enjoyment of the common blessings of God, and fellow heirs of the same glory.

And by being thus desirous that every one should have their full share of the favours of God, they would be glad to see one another happy in the little enjoyments of this life.

5. Ouranius is a holy priest, full of the spirit of the gospel, watching, labouring, and praying for a poor country village. Every soul in it is as dear to him as himself; and he loves them all as he loves himself, because he prays for them all as often as he prays for himself.

If his whole life is one continual exercise of great zeal and labour, hardly ever satisfied with any degrees of care and watchfulness, it is because he has learned the great value of souls, by so often appearing before God as an intercessor for them.

He never thinks he can love or do enough for his flock; because he never considers them in any other view, than as so many persons that, by receiving the gifts and graces of God, are to become his hope, his joy, and his crown of rejoicing. He goes about his parish, and visits every body in it; but visits in the same spirit of piety that he preaches to them: he visits them to encourage their virtues, to assist them with his advice, to discover their manner of life, and to know the state of their souls, that he may intercede with God for them, according to their particular necessities.

6. When Ouranius first entered into holy orders, he had a haughtiness in his temper, a great contempt for all foolish and unreasonable people: but he has prayed away this spirit, and has now the greatest tenderness for the most obstinate sinners; because he is always hoping that God will, sooner or later, hear those prayers that he makes for their repentance.

The rudeness, illnature, or perverse behaviour of any of his flock, used at first to betray him into impatience ; but it now raises no other passion in him, than a desire of being upon his knees in prayer to God for them.

Thus have his prayers for others altered and amended the state of his own heart.

It would delight you to see with what spirit he converses, and with what tenderness he reprobres, with what affection he exhorts, and with what vigor he preaches ; and it is all owing to this, because he reproves, exhorts, and preaches to those, for whom he first prays to God.

This devotion softens his heart, enlightens his mind, sweetens his temper, and makes every thing that comes from him instructive, amiable, and affecting.

7. At his first coming to this little village, it was as disagreeable to him as a prison, and every day seemed too tedious to be endured in so retired a place. He thought his parish was too full of poor and mean people, that were none of them fit for the conversation of a gentleman.

This put him upon a close application to his studies. He kept much at home, wrote notes upon Homer and Platus, and sometimes thought it hard to be called to pray by any poor body, when he was just in the midst of one of Homer's battles.

This was his polite, or I may rather say, poor, ignorant turn of mind, before devotion had got the government of his heart.

But now his days are so far from being te

dious, or his parish too great a retirement, that he only wants more time to do that variety of good which his soul thirsts after. The solitude of his little parish is become matter of great comfort to him, because he hopes that God has placed him and his flock there, to make it their way to heaven.

He can now not only converse with, but gladly wait upon the poorest kind of people. He is now daily watching over the weak, humbling himself to perverse, rude, ignorant people, wherever he can find them ; and is so far from desiring to be considered as a gentleman, that he desires to be used as the servant of all ; and in the spirit of his Lord and Master girds himself, and is glad to kneel down and wash any of their feet.

He now thinks the poorest creature in his parish good enough, and great enough, to deserve the humblest attendances, the kindest friendship, the tenderest offices, he can possibly show them.

He is so far now from wanting agreeable company, that he thinks there is no better conversation in the world, than to be talking with poor and mean people about the kingdom of heaven.

All these noble thoughts and divine sentiments are the effects of his great devotion ; he presents every one so often before God in his prayers, that he never thinks he can esteem, or serve those enough, for whom he implores so many mercies from God.

8. Ouranius is mightily affected with this passage of holy Scripture, “ The effectual, fer-

vent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," James v, 16.

This makes him practise all the arts of holy living, and aspire after every instance of piety, that his prayers for his flock may have their full force, and avail much with God.

For this reason, he has sold a small estate that he had, and has erected a charitable retirement for ancient, poor people, to live in prayer and piety ; that his prayers being assisted by such good works, may pierce the clouds, and bring down blessings upon those souls committed to his care.

9. Ouranius reads how God himself said unto Abimelech concerning Abraham, "He is a prophet ; he shall pray for thee and thou shalt live," Gen. xx, 7.

And again how he said of Job, "And my servant Job shall pray for you ; for him will I accept," Job xlvi, 8.

From these passages Ouranius justly concludes, that the prayers of men eminent for holiness, have an extraordinary power with God ; that he grants to other people such blessings, through their prayers, as would not be granted to men of less piety. This makes Ouranius exceeding studious of Christian perfection, searching after every grace and holy temper, fearful of every error and defect in his life, lest his prayers for his flock should be less availing with God.

This makes him careful of every temper of his heart, give alms of all that he hath, watch and fast, and mortify, and live according to the

strictest rules of temperance, meekness, and humility, that he may be in some degree like an Abraham or a Job, in his parish, and make such prayers for them as God will hear and accept.

These are the happy effects which a devout intercession hath produced in the life of Ouranius.

And if other people, in their several stations, were to imitate his example, in such a manner as suited their particular state of life, they would certainly find the same happy effects from it.

10. If masters, for instance, were to remember their servants in their prayers, beseeching God to bless them, and suiting their petitions to the particular wants of their servants; letting no day pass without a full performance of this part of devotion; the benefit would be as great to themselves, as to their servants.

No way so likely as this, to inspire them with a true sense of that power which they have in their hands, to make them delight in doing good, and become exemplary in all the parts of a wise and good master.

The presenting their servants so often before God as equally related to God, and entitled to the same heaven as themselves, would incline them to treat them not only with such humanity as became fellow creatures, but with such tenderness, care, and generosity as became fellow heirs of the same glory. This devotion would make masters incline to every thing that was good toward their servants; be watchful of their behaviour, and as ready to require of them an

exact observance of the duties of Christianity, as of the duties of their service.

This would teach them to consider their servants as God's servants, to desire their perfection, to do nothing before them that might corrupt their minds, to impose no business upon them that should lessen their sense of religion, or hinder them from their full share of devotion, both public and private. This praying for them would make them as glad to see their servants eminent in piety as themselves, and contrive that they should have all opportunities and encouragements, both to know and perform all the duties of the Christian life.

11. How natural would it be for such a master, to perform every part of family devotion ; to have constant prayers ; to excuse no one's absence from them ; to have the Scriptures and books of piety often read among his servants ; to take all opportunities of instructing them, of raising their minds to God, and teaching them to do all their business as a service to God, and upon the hopes and expectations of another life ?

How natural would it be for such a one to pity their weakness and ignorance, to bear with the dulness of their understandings, or the perverseness of their tempers ; to reprove them with tenderness, exhort them with affection, as hoping that God would hear his prayers for them ?

How impossible would it be for a master, that thus interceded with God for his servants, to use any unkind threatenings toward them, to damn

and curse them as dogs and scoundrels, and treat them only as dregs of the creation ?

This devotion would give them another spirit, and make them consider how to make proper returns of care, kindness, and protection, to those who had spent their strength and time in service and attendance upon them.

12. Now if gentlemen think it too low an employment to exercise such a devotion as this for their servants, let them consider how far they are from the spirit of Christ, who made himself not only an intercessor, but a sacrifice for the whole race of sinful mankind ?

Let them consider how miserable their greatness would be, if the Son of God should think it as much below him to pray for them, as they do to pray for their fellow creatures.

Let them consider how far they are from that spirit which prays for its most unjust enemies, if they have not kindness enough to pray for those, by whose labours and service they live in ease themselves.

13. Again : if parents should thus make themselves advocates and intercessors with God for their children, constantly applying to heaven in behalf of them, nothing would be more likely, not only to bless their children, but also to dispose their own minds to the performance of every thing that was excellent and praiseworthy.

I do not suppose, but that the generality of parents remember their children in their prayers. But the thing here intended, is not a general remembrance of them, but a regular method of

recommending all their particular needs unto God ; and of praying for every such particular grace and virtue for them as their state and condition of life shall seem to require.

The state of parents is a holy state, in some degree like that of the priesthood, and calls upon them to bless their children with their prayers and sacrifices to God. Thus it was that holy Job watched over, and blessed his children, he "sanctified them, he rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings, according to the number of them all," Job i, 5.

If parents, therefore, considering themselves in this light, should be daily calling upon God in a solemn, deliberate manner, altering and extending their intercessions as the state and growth of their children required, such devotion would have a mighty influence upon the rest of their lives ; it would make them very circumspect in the government of themselves ; prudent and careful of every thing they said or did, lest their example should hinder that which they so constantly desired in their prayers.

14. If a father was daily making particular prayers to God, that he would please to inspire his children with true piety, great humility, and strict temperance, what could be more likely to make the father himself become exemplary in these virtues ? How naturally would he grow ashamed of wanting such virtues, as he thought necessary for his children ? So that his prayers for their piety would be a certain means of exalting his own.

If a father thus considered himself as an intercessor with God for his children, to bless them with his prayers, how would such thoughts make him avoid every thing that was displeasing to God, lest when he prayed for his children, God should reject his prayers?

How tenderly, how religiously would such a father converse with his children, whom he considered as his little spiritual flock, whose virtues he was to form by his example, encourage by his authority, nourish by his counsel, and prosper by his prayers to God for them.

How fearful would he be of all unjust ways of raising their fortune, of bringing them up in pride and indulgence, or of making them too fond of the world, lest he should thereby render them incapable of those graces which he was so often beseeching God to grant them.

15. Lastly, If all people, when they feel the first approaches of resentment, envy, or contempt, toward others ; or if in all little disagreements and misunderstandings whatever, they should, instead of indulging their minds with little, low reflections, have recourse to a more particular intercession with God, for such persons as had raised their envy, resentment, or discontent ; this would be a certain way to prevent the growth of all uncharitable tempers.

If you was always to form your prayer at that time to the greatest degree of contrariety to that temper which you was then in, it would be an excellent means of mending your heart.

As for instance : when at any time you find

in your heart motions of envy toward any person, whether on account of his riches, power, reputation, learning, or advancement, if you should immediately pray to God to bless and prosper him in that very thing which raised your envy ; if you should repeat your petitions in the strongest terms, beseeching God to grant him all the happiness from the enjoyment of it that can possibly be received, you would soon find it to be the best antidote in the world to expel the venom of that passion.

Again : If in any little difference or misunderstandings that you happened to have at any time with a relation, a neighbour, or any one else, you should then pray for them in a more extraordinary manner than you ever did before, beseeching God to give them every grace and blessing you can think of, you would take the speediest method of reconciling all differences, and clearing up all misunderstandings. You would then think nothing too great to be forgiven, stay for no condescensions, need no mediation of a third person ; but be glad to testify your love and good will to him, who had so high a place in your secret prayers.

This would remove all peevish passions, soften your heart into the most tender condescensions, and be the best arbitrator of all differences that happened betwixt you and any of your acquaintance.

16. Hence we may also learn the odious nature of all spite, hatred, contempt, and angry passions. They are not to be considered as defects

in good nature, not as failings in civility or good breeding, but as such base tempers as are entirely inconsistent with the charity of intercession.

You think it a small matter to be peevish or ill-natured to such or such a man; but you should consider, whether it be a small matter to do that which you could not do, if you had but so much charity as to be able to recommend him to God in your prayers.

You think it a small matter to ridicule one man, and despise another; but you should consider, whether it be a small matter to want that charity toward these people, which Christians are not allowed to want toward their most inveterate enemies.

For, be but as charitable to these men, do but bless and pray for them, as you are obliged to bless and pray for your enemies, and then you will find that you have charity enough, to make it impossible for you to treat them with any degree of scorn or contempt.

For you cannot possibly despise and ridicule that man, whom your private prayers recommend to the love and favour of God.

When you despise and ridicule a man, it is with no other end, but to make him ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of other men. How, therefore, can it be possible for you sincerely to beseech God to bless that man with the honour of his love and favour, whom you desire men to treat as worthy of their contempt?

Could you, out of love to a neighbour, desire your prince to honour him with his esteem and

favour, and yet at the same time expose him to the scorn and derision of your own servants ?

Yet this is as possible, as to expose that man to the scorn and contempt of your fellow creatures, whom you recommend to the favour of God in your secret prayers.

17. You cannot despise a brother, without despising him that stands in a high relation to God, to his Son Jesus Christ, and to the holy Trinity.

You would certainly think it a mighty impiety to treat a writing with contempt, that had been written by the finger of God ; and can you think it a less impiety to contemn a brother, who is not only the workmanship, but the image of God ?

You would justly think it great profaneness, to contemn and trample upon an altar, because it was appropriated to holy uses, and had had the body of Christ so often placed upon it ; and can you suppose it to be less profaneness, to scorn and trample upon a brother, who so belongs to God, that his very body is the "temple of the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. vi, 15.

18. But to return ; intercession is not only the best arbitrator of all differences, the best promoter of true friendship, the best cure and preservative against all unkind tempers, all angry and haughty passions, but is also of great use to discover to us the true state of our own hearts.

There are many tempers which we think lawful and innocent, which we never suspect of any harm ; which if they were to be tried by

this devotion, would soon show us how we have deceived ourselves.

Susurrus is a pious, temperate man, remarkable for abundance of excellent qualities. No one more constant at the service of the church. His charity is so great that he almost starves himself, to be able to give greater alms to the poor.

19. Yet Susurrus had a prodigious failing, along with these great virtues.

He had a mighty inclination to hear and discover all the defects and infirmities of all about him. You was welcome to tell him any thing of any body, provided that you did not do it in the style of an enemy. He never disliked an evil speaker, but when his language was rough and passionate. If you would but whisper any thing gently, though it were ever so bad, Susurrus was ready to receive it.

When he visits, you generally hear him relating, how sorry he is for the failings of such a neighbour. He is always letting you know, how tender he is of the reputation of his neighbour; how loath to say that which he is forced to say; and how gladly he would conceal it, if it could be concealed.

Susurrus had such a tender, compassionate manner of relating things the most prejudicial to his neighbours, that he even seemed, both to himself and others, to be exercising a Christian charity at the same time that he was indulging a whispering, evil-speaking temper.

Susurrus once whispered to a particular friend in great secrecy, something too bad to be spoken

of publicly. He ended with saying how glad he was, that it had not yet taken wind, and that he had some hopes it might not be true, though the suspicions were very strong. His friend made him this reply :

You say, Susurrus, that you are glad it has not yet taken wind : and that you have some hopes it may not prove true. Go home, therefore, to your closet, and pray to God for this man in such a manner and with such earnestness, as you would pray for yourself on the like occasion.

Beseech God to interpose in his favour, to save him from false accusers, and bring all those to shame, who, by uncharitable whispers, and secret stories, wound him, like those that stab in the dark. And when you have made this prayer, then you may, if you please, go tell the same secret to some other friend, that you have told to me.

20. Susurrus was exceedingly affected with this rebuke, and felt the force of it upon his conscience in as lively a manner, as if he had seen the books opened at the day of judgment.

All other arguments might have been resisted : but it was impossible for Susurrus either to reject, or follow this advice, without being equally self condemned in the highest degree.

From that time to this, he has constantly used himself to this method of intercession : and his heart is so entirely changed by it, that he can now no more privately whisper any thing to the prejudice of another, than he can openly pray to God to do people hurt.

Whisperings and evil speakings now hurt his ears, like oaths and curses ; and he has appointed one day in the week, to be a day of penance as long as he lives, to humble himself before God, in the sorrowful confession of his former guilt.

It may be well wondered, how a man of so much piety as Susurrus, could be so deceived in himself, as to live in such a state of scandal and evil speaking, without suspecting himself to be guilty of it. But it was the tenderness and seeming compassion, with which he heard and related every thing, that deceived both himself and others.

This was a falseness of heart, which was fully discovered by the true charity of intercession.

And if people of virtue, who think as little harm of themselves as Susurrus did, were often to try their spirit by such an intercession, they would often find themselves to be such, as they least of all suspected.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Recommending devotion at three o'clock, called in Scripture the ninth hour of the day. The subject of prayer at this hour may be resignation to the Divine pleasure. The nature and duty of conformity to the will of God in all our actions and designs.

1. THERE is nothing wise or holy, or just, but the great will of God. This is as strictly true, as that nothing is infinite and eternal but God.

No beings, therefore, whether in heaven or

on earth, can be wise, or holy, or just, but so far as they conform to this will of God. It is conformity to this will, that gives virtue and perfection to the highest services of angels in heaven ; and it is conformity to the same will, that makes the ordinary actions of men on earth become an acceptable service unto God.

The whole nature of virtue consists in conforming, and the whole nature of vice in declining from the will of God. All God's creatures are created to fulfil his will ; the sun and moon obey his will by the necessity of their nature ; angels conform to his will by the perfection of their nature : if, therefore, you would show yourself not to be a rebel and apostate from the order of creation, you must act like beings both above and below you ; it must be the great desire of your soul, that God's will may be done by you on earth, as it is done in heaven. It must be the settled purpose of your heart, to will nothing, design nothing, do nothing, but so far as you have reason to believe it is the will of God.

2. It is as necessary to think thus of God and yourself, as to think that you have any dependence upon him. And it is as great a rebellion against God, to think that your will may ever differ from his, as to think that you have not received the power of willing from him.

You are, therefore, to consider yourself as a being that has no other business in the world, but to be that which God requires you to be ; to have no tempers, no rules, no designs of your own, but to fill some place, and act some part in strict

conformity and thankful resignation to the Divine pleasure.

To think that you are your own or at your own disposal, is as absurd as to think that you created yourself. It is as plain that you are thus God's, that you thus belong to him, and are to act and suffer all in thankful resignation to his pleasure, as that in him you live, and move, and have your being.

3. Resignation to the Divine will, signifies a cheerful approbation, and thankful acceptance, of every thing that comes from God. It is not enough patiently to submit, but we must thankfully receive, and fully approve of every thing, that by the order of God's providence happens to us.

For there is no reason why we should be patient, but what is as strong a reason why we should be thankful. If we were under the hands of a wise and good physician that could not mistake or do any thing to us but what tended to our benefit ; it would not be enough to be patient, and abstain from murmuring against such a physician ; it would be as much a breach of gratitude, not to be thankful for what he did, as it would be to murmur at him.

Now this is our true state with relation to God ; we cannot be said so much as to believe in him, unless we believe him to be of infinite wisdom. Every argument, therefore, for patience under his disposal of us, is as strong an argument for thankfulness. And there needs no more to dispose us to this gratitude toward God,

than a full belief in him, that he is this being of infinite wisdom, love, and goodness.

Do but fully assent to this truth, and then you will cheerfully approve of every thing that God has already approved for you.

When you are satisfied that God does not only do that which is wise, and good, but which is the effect of infinite wisdom and love in the care of you ; it will be as necessary to be pleased with every thing which God chooses for you, as to wish your own happiness.

4. Whenever, therefore, you find yourself disposed to murmuring, at any thing that is the effect of God's providence over you, you must look upon yourself as denying either the wisdom or goodness of God. For every complaint supposes this. You would never complain of your neighbour, but that you suppose you can show either his unwise, unjust, or unkind behaviour toward you.

Now every impatient reflection under the providence of God, is the same accusation of God. A complaint always supposes ill-usage.

Hence you may see the great necessity of this thankful state of heart, because the want of it implies an accusation of God's want either of wisdom or goodness in his disposal of us. It is not, therefore, any high degree of perfection, founded in any uncommon nicety of thinking, but a plain principle, founded in this plain belief, that God is a being of infinite wisdom and goodness.

5. This resignation to the Divine will, may be

considered in two respects: first, as it signifies a thankful approbation of God's general providence over the world: secondly, as it signifies a thankful acceptance of his particular providence over us.

First, every man is, by the first article of his creed, obliged to acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of God, in his general providence over the world. He is to believe that it is the effect of God's great wisdom and goodness, that the world itself was formed at such a particular time, and in such a manner; that the general order of nature, the whole frame of things, is contrived and formed in the best manner. He is to believe that God's providence over states and kingdoms, times and seasons, is all for the best; that the revolutions of state, and changes of empire, the rise and fall of monarchies, persecutions, wars, famines, and plagues, are all permitted and conducted by God's providence, to the general good of man in this state of trial.

A good man is to believe all this, with the same fulness of assent, as he believes that God is in every place, though he neither sees, nor can comprehend the manner of his presence.

This is a noble magnificence of thought, a true greatness of mind, to be thus affected with God's general providence, admiring and magnifying his wisdom in all things: never murmuring at the course of the world, or the state of things, but looking upon all around, at heaven and earth, as a pleased spectator; and adoring that invisible hand, which gives laws to all motions, and over-

rules all events to ends suitable to the highest wisdom and goodness.

6. It is very common for people to allow themselves great liberty in finding fault with such things as have only God for their cause.

Every one thinks he may justly say, what a wretched, abominable climate he lives in. This man is frequently telling you, what a dismal cursed day it is, and what intolerable seasons we have. Another thinks it is hardly worth his while to live in a world so full of changes and revolutions. But these are tempers of great impiety, and show that religion has not yet its seat in the heart.

It sounds indeed much better to murmur at the course of the world, than to murmur at providence ; to complain of the seasons and weather, than to complain of God ; but if these have no other cause but God, it is a poor excuse to say, that you are only angry at the things, but not at the cause and director of them.

How sacred the whole frame of the world is, how all things are to be considered as God's, and referred to him, is fully taught by our blessed Lord, in the case of oaths : "But I say unto you, swear not at all ; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne ; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool ; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King ; neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black," Matt. v, 37 ; that is, because the whiteness or blackness of thy hair is not thine, but God's.

Here you see all things in the whole order of nature, from the highest heavens to the smallest hair, are to be considered, not separately as they are in themselves, but as in some relation to God. And if this be good reasoning, thou shalt not swear by the earth, a city, or thy hair, because these things are God's, and in a certain manner belong to him ; is it not the same reasoning to say, 'Thou shalt not murmur at the seasons of the earth, the states of cities, and the change of times, because all these things are in the hands of God, have him for their author, are directed and governed by him to such ends as are most suitable to his wise providence ?

For whoso murmurs at the course of the world, murmurs at God that governs the course of the world. Whoso repines at seasons and weather, and speaketh impatiently of times and events, repines and speaks impatiently of God who is the sole Lord and Governor of times, seasons, and events.

7. As, therefore, when we think of God himself, we are to have no sentiments but of praise and thanksgiving ; so when we look at those things which are under the direction of God, we are to receive them with the same tempers.

And though we are not to think all things right, and just, and lawful, which the providence of God permits ; for then nothing could be unjust, because nothing is without his permission ; yet we must adore God in the greatest public calamities, the most grievous persecutions, as things that are suffered by God, like plagues and

famines, for ends suitable to his wisdom and glory in the government of the world.

There is nothing more suitable to the piety of a reasonable creature, or the spirit of a Christian, than thus to approve, admire, and glorify God in all the acts of his general providence ; considering the whole world as his particular family, and all events as directed by his wisdom.

Every one seems to consent to this as an undeniable truth, *That all things must be as God pleases* ; and is not this enough to make every man pleased with them himself ? And how can a man be a peevish complainer of any thing that is the effect of providence, but by showing that his own will and wisdom are of more weight with him, than the will and wisdom of God ? And what can religion be said to have done for a man, whose heart is in this state ?

For if he cannot thank and praise God, as well in calamities and sufferings, as in prosperity and happiness, he is far from the piety of a Christian, as he that only loves them that love him, is from the charity of a Christian. For to thank God only for such things as you like, is no more a proper act of piety, than to believe only what you see, is an act of faith.

8. Thus much concerning resignation to the Divine will, as it signifies a thankful approbation of God's general providence : it is now to be considered, as it signifies a thankful acceptance of God's particular providence over us.

Every man is to consider himself as a particular object of God's providence ; under the same

care and protection of God, as if the world had been made for him alone. It is not by chance that any man is born at such a time, of such parents, and in such place and condition. It is as certain, that every soul comes into the body at such a time, and in such circumstances, by the express designation of God, according to some purposes of his will, and for some particular ends ; this is as certain, as that it is by the express designation of God, that some beings are angels, and others are men.

9. The Scriptures assure us, it was by Divine appointment, that our blessed Saviour was born at Bethlehem, and at such a time. Now although it was owing to the dignity of his person, and the great importance of his birth, that thus much of the Divine counsel was declared to the world concerning the time and manner of it ; yet we are as sure from the same Scriptures, that the time and manner of every man's coming into the world, is according to the direction of Divine providence, and in such time, and place, and circumstances, as are directed and governed by God, for particular ends of his wisdom and goodness.

This we are as certain of from plain revelation, as we can be of any thing. For if we are told, that not a "sparrow falleth to the ground without our heavenly Father ;" can any thing more strongly teach us, that much greater beings, such as human souls, came not into the world without the care and direction of our heavenly Father ? If it is said, "The very hairs of

your head are all numbered ;" is it not to teach us, that nothing, not the smallest things imaginable, happen to us by chance ? But if the smallest things we can conceive, are declared to be under the Divine direction, need we, or can we, be more plainly taught that the greatest things of life, such as the manner of our coming into the world, our parents, the time and other circumstances of our birth and condition, are all according to the direction and appointment of Divine providence ?

10. When the disciples put this question to our blessed Lord, concerning the blind man, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind ?" He made this answer, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents ; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him," John ix, 2, 3. Plainly declaring, that the particular circumstances of every man's birth, the body that he receives, and the state of life into which he is born, are appointed by a secret providence, which directs all things to their particular times and seasons, and manner of existence, that the wisdom and works of God may be made manifest in them all.

As therefore it is certain, that all that is particular in our state, is the effect of God's particular providence over us, and intended for some particular ends both of his glory and our own happiness, we are by the greatest obligations called upon to resign our will to the will of God in all these respects ; thankfully approving and accepting every thing that is particular in our

state ; praising and glorifying his name for our birth of such parents, and in such circumstances ; being fully assured, that it was for some reasons of infinite wisdom and goodness, that we were so born into such particular states of life.

11. If the man above mentioned, was born blind, that the "works of God might be manifested in him," had he not great reason to praise God for appointing him in such a particular manner, to be the instrument of his glory ? And if one person is born here, and another there ; if one falls amongst riches, and another into poverty ; if one receive his flesh and blood from these parents, and another from those, for as particular ends, as the man was born blind ; have not all people the greatest reason to bless God, and to be thankful for their particular state and condition, because all that is particular in it, is as directly intended for the glory of God, and their own good, as the particular blindness of that man, who was so born, that "the works of God might be manifested in him ?"

How noble an idea does this give us of the Divine omniscience presiding over the whole world, and governing such a long chain and combination of seeming accidents, to the common and particular advantage of all beings ? So that all persons, in such a wonderful variety of causes and events, should fall into such particular states, as were foreseen, and foreordained to their best advantage, and so as to be most serviceable to the wise and glorious ends of God's government of all the world.

12. Had you been any thing else than what you are, you had, all things considered, been less wisely provided for than you are now ; you had wanted some circumstances that are best fitted to make you happy yourself, and serviceable to the glory of God.

Could you see all that which God sees, all that happy chain of causes and motives, which are to move and invite you to a right course of life, you would see something to make you like that state you are in, as fitter for you than any other.

But as you cannot see this, so it is here that your trust in God, is to exercise itself, and render you as thankful for the happiness of your state, as if you saw every thing that contributes to it with your own eyes.

But now if this is the case of every man in the world, thus blessed with some particular state that is most convenient for him, how reasonable is it for every man, to will that which God has already willed for him ; and by a trust in the Divine goodness, thankfully adore that wise providence, which he is sure has made the best choice for him of those things, which he could not choose for himself.

13. Every uneasiness at our own state is founded upon comparing it with that of other people. Which is full as unreasonable, as if a man in a dropsy should be angry at those that prescribe different things to him, from those which are prescribed to people in health. For all the different states of life are like the differ-

ent states of diseases, and what is a remedy to one man may be poison to another.

So that to murmur because you are not as some others are, is as if a man in one disease, should murmur that he is not treated like him that is in another. Whereas, if he was to have his will, he would be killed by that, which will prove the cure of another.

It is just thus in the various conditions of life ; if you complain of any thing in your state, you may, for aught you know, be so ungrateful to God as to murmur at that very thing which is to prove the cause of your salvation.

Had you it in your power to get that which you think is so grievous to want, it might perhaps be that very thing which would expose you to eternal damnation.

So that, whether we consider the infinite goodness of God, that cannot choose amiss for us, or our own great ignorance of what is most advantageous to us, there can be nothing so reasonable, as to have no will but that of God's, and desire nothing for ourselves, in our persons, our state, and condition, but that which the good providence of God appoints us.

14. Further, as the good providence of God introduces us into the world, into such states and conditions as are most convenient for us ; so the same unerring wisdom orders all events and changes in the whole course of our lives, in such a manner as to render them the fittest means to exercise and improve our virtue.

Nothing hurts us, nothing destroys us, but the

ill use of that liberty, with which God has entrusted us.

We are as sure that nothing happens to us by chance, as that the world itself was not made by chance; we are as certain that all things happen, and work together for our good, as that God is goodness itself. So that a man has as much reason to will every thing that happens to him, because God wills it, as to think that is wisest which is directed by infinite wisdom.

The providence of God is not more concerned in the government of night and day, and the variety of seasons, than in the common course of events that seem most to depend upon the mere wills of men. So that it is as strictly right, to look upon all worldly changes, all the various turns in your own life, to be the effects of Divine providence, as the rising and setting of the sun, or the alterations of the seasons of the year. As you are therefore always to adore the wisdom of God in the direction of these things; so it is the same reasonable duty, always to magnify God as an equal director of every thing that happens to you in the course of your own life.

15. There is nothing that so powerfully governs the heart, as a true sense of God's presence; and nothing so constantly keeps us under a lively sense of the presence of God, as this holy resignation, which attributes every thing to him, and receives every thing as from him.

Could we see a miracle from God, how would our thoughts be effected with a holy awe and

veneration of his presence ! But if we consider every thing as God's doing, either by order or permission, we shall then be affected with common things, as they would be who saw a miracle.

For as there is nothing to affect you in a miracle, but as it is the action of God, and bespeaks his presence ; so when you consider God as acting in all things, and all events, then all things will become venerable to you, like miracles, and fill you with the same awful sentiments of the Divine presence.

16. Now you must not reserve the exercise of this pious temper to any particular times or occasions, or fancy how resigned you will be to God, if such or such trials should happen ; for this is amusing yourself with the notion of resignation, instead of the virtue itself.

Do not therefore please yourself with thinking, how piously you would act and submit to God in a plague, a famine, or persecution ; but be intent upon the perfection of the present day ; and be assured, that the best way of showing a true zeal, is to make little things the occasions of great piety.

Begin therefore in the smallest matters, and most ordinary occasions, and accustom your mind to the daily exercise of this pious temper, in the lowest occurrences of life. And when a contempt, an affront, a little injury, loss or disappointment, or the smallest events of every day, continually raise your mind to God in proper acts of resignation, then you may justly hope that you shall be numbered amongst those that are

resigned, and thankful to God in the greatest trials and afflictions.

CHAPTER XIX.

Of the excellency and greatness of a devout spirit.

1. I HAVE now finished what I intended in this treatise. I have explained the nature of devotion, both as it signifies a life devoted to God, and as it signifies a regular method of prayer. I have now only to add a word or two, in recommendation of a life governed by this spirit.

And because in this polite age, we have so lived away the spirit of devotion, that many seem afraid even to be suspected of it, imagining great devotion to be great bigotry ; that it is founded in ignorance and poorness of spirit, and that little, weak, and dejected minds, are generally the greatest proficients in it :

It shall here be shown, that great devotion is the noblest temper of the greatest and noblest souls ; and that they who think it receives any advantage from ignorance, are themselves entirely ignorant of the nature of devotion, the nature of God, and the nature of themselves.

People of fine parts and learning, or of great knowledge in worldly matters, may perhaps think it hard to have their want of devotion charged upon their ignorance. But if they will be content to be tried by reason and Scripture, it may

soon be made appear that a want of devotion, wherever it is, either amongst the learned or unlearned, is founded in gross ignorance, and the greatest blindness and insensibility that can happen to a rational creature.

And that devotion is so far from being the effect of a little and dejected mind, that it must and will be always highest in the most perfect natures.

2. And first, Who reckons it a sign of a poor, little mind, for a man to be full of reverence and duty to his parents, to have the truest love and honour for his friends, or to excel in the highest instances of gratitude to his benefactor ?

Are not these tempers in the highest degree, in the most exalted and perfect minds ?

And yet what is high devotion, but the highest exercise of these tempers of duty, reverence, love, honour, and gratitude to the amiable, glorious parent, friend and benefactor of all mankind ?

It is a true greatness of mind, to reverence the authority of your parents, to fear the displeasure of your friend, to dread the reproaches of your benefactor ? and must not this fear, and dread, and reverence, be much more just, and reasonable, and honourable, when they are in the highest degree toward God.

So that, as long as duty to parents, love to friends, and gratitude to benefactors, are thought great and honourable tempers ; devotion, which is nothing else but duty, love, and gratitude to God, must have the highest place amongst our highest virtues.

If a prince, out of his mere goodness, should send you a pardon by one of his slaves, would you think it a part of your duty to receive the slave with marks of love, esteem, and gratitude, for his kindness in bringing you so great a gift ; and at the same time think it a meanness and poorness of spirit, to show love, and gratitude, to the prince who of his own goodness freely sent you the pardon ?

And yet this would be as reasonable, as to suppose, that love, esteem, honour, and gratitude, are noble tempers, and instances of a great soul, when they are paid to our fellow creatures ; but the effects of a poor ignorant mind, when they are paid to God. .

3. Even that part of devotion which expresses itself in sorrowful confessions, and the penitential tears of a broken and contrite heart, is very far from being any sign of a little and ignorant mind.

For who does not acknowledge it an instance of an ingenuous, generous, and brave mind to acknowledge a fault, and ask pardon for any offence ? And are not the finest and most improved minds, the most remarkable for this excellent temper ?

Is it not also allowed, that the ingenuousness and excellence of a man's spirit is much shown, when his sorrow and indignation at himself rises in proportion to the folly of his crime, and the goodness and greatness of the person he has offended ?

Now if things are thus, then the greater any man's mind is, the more he knows of God and

himself, the more will he be disposed to prostrate himself before God in all the humblest acts and expressions of repentance.

And the greater the generosity and penetration of his mind is, the more will he indulge a passionate, tender sense of God's just displeasure ; and the more he knows of the greatness, the goodness, and perfection of the Divine nature, the fuller of shame and confusion will he be at his own sins and ingratitude.

And on the other hand, the more dull and ignorant any soul is, the more base and ungenerous, the more senseless it is of the goodness of God, the more averse to humble confession and repentance.

Devotion, therefore, is so far from being best suited to little, ignorant minds, that a true elevation of soul, a lively sense of honour, and great knowledge of God and ourselves, are the greatest helps that our devotion hath.

4. On the other hand, it shall be made appear that indevotion is founded in the most excessive ignorance.

And, First, Our blessed Lord and his apostles were eminent instances of great devotion. Now if we will grant, (as all Christians must grant,) that their great devotion was founded in a true knowledge of the nature of devotion, the nature of God, and the nature of man ; then it is plain, that all those that are insensible of devotion, are in this excessive state of ignorance ; they neither know God, nor themselves, nor devotion.

Again : How comes it that most people have

recourse to devotion, when they are in sickness, distress, or fear of death ? Is it not because this state shows them more of the want of God, and their own weakness, than they perceive at other times ? Is it not because their approaching end convinces them of something which they did not half perceive before ?

Now if devotion at these seasons, is the effect of a better knowledge of God and ourselves, then the neglect of devotion at other times, is owing to ignorance of God and ourselves.

5. Further ; as indevotion is ignorance, so it is the most shameful ignorance, and such as is to be charged with the greatest folly.

This will fully appear to any one that considers by what rules we are to judge of the excellence of any knowledge, or the shamefullessness of any ignorance.

Now knowledge itself would be no excellence, nor ignorance any reproach to us, but that we are rational creatures.

It follows plainly, that knowledge which is most suitable to our rational nature, and which most concerns us, as such, to know is our highest, finest knowledge ; and that ignorance which relates to things that are most essential to us, as rational creatures, and which we are most concerned to know, is, of all others, the most gross and shameful ignorance.

6. If a gentleman should fancy that the moon is no bigger than it appears to the eye, that it shines with its own light, that all the stars are only so many spots of light ; if, after reading

books of astronomy, he should still continue in the same opinion, most people would think he had but a poor apprehension.

But if the same person should think it better to provide for a short life here, than to prepare for a glorious eternity hereafter; that it was better to be rich, than to be eminent in piety, his ignorance and dulness would be too great to be compared to any thing else.

That is the most clear and improved understanding, which judges best of the value and worth of things. All the rest is but the capacity of an animal; it is but mere seeing and hearing.

If a man had eyes that could see beyond the stars, or pierce into the heart of the earth, but could not see the things that were before him, or discern any thing that was serviceable to him, we should reckon that he had but a very bad sight.

If another had ears that received sounds from the world in the moon, but could hear nothing that was said or done upon earth, we should look upon him to be as bad as deaf.

In like manner, if a man has a memory that can retain a great many things; if he has a wit that is sharp and acute in arts and sciences, but has a dull, poor apprehension of his duty and relation to God, of the value of piety, or the worth of moral virtue, he may very justly be reckoned to have a bad understanding. He is but like the man, that can only see and hear such things as are of no benefit to him.

7. To proceed : we know how our blessed Lord acted in the human body ; it was his *meat and drink, to do the will of his Father which is in heaven.*

And if any number of heavenly spirits were to leave their habitations in the light of God, and be for awhile united to human bodies, they would certainly tend toward God in all their actions, and be as heavenly as they could, in a state of flesh and blood.

They would certainly act in this manner, because they would know that God was the only good of all spirits ; and that whether they were in the body, or out of the body, in heaven, or on earth, they must have every degree of their greatness and happiness from God alone.

All human spirits, therefore, the more exalted they are, the more they know their divine original, the nearer they come to heavenly spirits, the more will they live to God in all their actions, making their whole life a state of devotion.

Devotion, therefore, is the greatest sign of a great and noble genius ; it supposes a soul in its highest state of knowledge ; and none but little and blinded minds, that are sunk into ignorance and vanity, are destitute of it.

8. If a human spirit should imagine some mighty prince to be greater than God, we should take it for a poor, ignorant creature ; all people would acknowledge such an imagination to be the height of stupidity.

But if this same human spirit should think it better to be devoted to some mighty prince, than

to be devoted to God, would not this still be a greater proof of a poor, ignorant, and blinded nature ?

Yet this is what all people do, who think any thing better, greater, or wiser, than a devout life.

So that which way soever we consider this matter, it plainly appears, that devotion is an instance of great judgment, of an elevated nature ; and the want of devotion is a certain proof of the want of understanding.

The greatest spirits of the heathen world, such as Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Epictetus, Marcus Antonius, owed all their greatness to the spirit of devotion.

They were full of God ; their wisdom and deep contemplations tended only to deliver men from the vanity of the world, the slavery of bodily passions, that they might act as spirits that came from God, and were soon to return to him.

9. Let libertines but grant that there is a God, and a providence, and then they have granted enough to justify the wisdom and support the honour of devotion.

For if there is an infinitely wise and good Creator, in whom we live, move, and have our being, whose providence governs all things in all places, surely it must be the highest act of our understanding to conceive rightly of him ; it must be the noblest instance of judgment, the most exalted temper of our nature, to worship and adore this universal providence, to conform to its laws, to study its wisdom, and to live and

act everywhere, as in the presence of this infinitely good and wise Creator.

Now he that lives thus, lives in the spirit of devotion.

And what can show such great parts, and so fine an understanding, as to live in this temper?

For if God is wisdom, surely he must be the wisest man in the world, who most conforms to the wisdom of God, who best obeys his providence, who enters farthest into his designs, and does all he can, that God's will may be done on earth, as it is done in heaven.

10. A devout man makes a true use of his reason, he sees through the vanity of the world, discovers the corruption of his nature, and the blindness of his passions. He lives by a law which is not visible to vulgar eyes; he enters into the world of spirits; he compares the greatest things, sets eternity against time; and chooses rather to be for ever great in the presence of God when he dies, than to have the greatest share of worldly pleasures whilst he lives.

11. Lastly, courage and bravery are words of a great sound, and seem to signify an heroic spirit; but yet humility, which seems to be the lowest, meanest part of devotion, is a more certain argument of a noble mind.

For humility contends with greater enemies, is more constantly engaged, more violently assaulted, suffers more and requires greater courage to support itself, than any instances of worldly bravery.

A man that dares be poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world, to approve himself to God ; that resists and rejects all human glory, that opposes the clamour of his passions, that meekly puts up all injuries, and dares stay for his reward till the invisible hand of God gives to every one their proper places, endures a much greater trial, and exerts a nobler fortitude, than he that is bold and daring in the fire of battle.

For the boldness of a soldier, if he is a stranger to the spirit of devotion, is rather weakness than fortitude ; it is at best but mad passion and heated spirits, and has no more true valour in it than the fury of a tiger.

Reason is our universal law, that obliges us in all places and all times ; and no actions have any honour, but so far as they are instances of our obedience to reason.

And it is as base to be bold and daring against the principle of reason and justice, as to be bold and daring in lying and perjury.

Would we therefore exercise a true fortitude, we must do all in the spirit of devotion, be valiant against the corruptions of the world, and the lusts of the flesh and the temptations of the devil : for to be daring and courageous against these enemies, is the noblest bravery that a human mind is capable of.

I have made this digression for the sake of those, who think great devotion to be bigotry and poorness of spirit ; that by these considerations they may see, how poor and mean all other

tempers are, if compared to it ; that they may see all worldly attainments, whether of greatness, wisdom, or bravery, are but empty sounds ; and there is nothing wise, or great, or noble, in a human spirit, but rightly to know, and heartily worship and adore the great God, that is the support and life of all spirits, whether in heaven or on earth.

THE END.







